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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the four 1999-2000 issues of a quarterly journal for teachers and parents of children in Montessori infant and toddler programs. The May 1999 issue presents articles on eating in the prepared environment and meeting infants' basic needs for food. The August 1999 issue includes articles discussing infants' sensory awareness and cooking with toddlers. The November 1999 issue features an article on sensory awareness in infants, a picture story of children in a Montessori toddler class making French bread, and an article on the developmental tasks of toddlers. The February 2000 issue covers ten key conditions for creating responsive care in infant and toddler environments. A regular feature of the journal is "Ask Ginny," an advice column. (KB)

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Infants and Toddlers, 1999-2000

Lillian DeVault Kroenke, Editor

Volume 3, Numbers 1-4

May 1999 – February 2000

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VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1

MAY 1999

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Infants and Toddlers

FEATURES

5 **Eating In The Prepared Environment**
by K. T. Korngold

9 **Meeting The Infant's Basic Needs For Food**
by Virginia Varga

DEPARTMENTS

4 **Editorial**
Two Years Later

4 **Ask Ginny**
Should We Expect Toddlers To Put Materials Back On The Shelf?

8 **Conference Review**
Submitted by Hope Caprye-Boos and Sharlet McClurkin

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Editorial
Two Years Later

A lot has happened in the last two years since I published the first issue of *Infants and Toddlers*. From the beginning, I've been determined to keep this publication as an independent enterprise. I have been active in Montessori education since 1963 and I have always believed in the importance of constructive professional communication.

Growing Postive Feedback

I have tried to attend every conference sponsored by the various national teacher education associations including the American Montessori Society, the North American Montessori Teachers Association (NAMTA), and the National Center for Montessori Education (NCME).

I've been energized by your interest, your enthusiasm and many positive comments of encouragement. One of you exclaimed, "The journal is getting better and better with every issue."

Another, from a school with a bulk mailing subscription, reported that they designate articles to discuss at their regular staff meetings.

At one school, they keep issues of the journal in a loose leaf notebook as a reference for both staff and parents.

The Journal Has Come a Long Way Already

- The journal is reaching more interns through teacher education programs.
- Several parents independently searched for the journal to become subscribers.
- Today one of about every five subscribers renews for two years.
- We have doubled our bulk rate school mailings.
- We mailed out over six hundred copies of the journal with the last issue.
- The list of outstanding contributors continues to expand.
- Our advertising services and support have continued to grow.

An International Flavor

In the last two years, we have added an international flavor. Today journal subscriptions cross continents to Italy, the West Indies, Australia, many friends in Canada and to our US protectorate Puerto Rico.

We have a Long Way To Go

Collectively, we have a way to go to reach the many people who have not yet heard or understood our message about the young child.

Each of has our own unique contribution to make this vision a part of our larger reality. We need to remember how important it is to work together to reach our goals for children.

Lillian DeVault Kroenke

Ask Ginny... by Ginny Varga

Q Should we expect toddlers to put materials back on the shelf?

A I expect toddlers to put things back on the shelf. You may ask, "How soon can I expect that to happen?" Very young children, maybe sixteen to eighteen months, for the most part will not learn that as quickly as some of the older toddlers. But that's not always so. It's not always a factor of age.

If you are observant, even after a few days you may begin to see signs of a child beginning to internalize the sequence of the day. At that point, when you see the children who are internalizing some order, observe those children carefully, wait until they look like they are really finished and go to them. You might even pick up material, handed to them and say something like, "Can you put this back," or "I'll show you where this goes," I always start with children who show some signs of internalizing the order or the sequence of the day. They learn very quickly.

If you focus on a child who is dumping everything and leaving everything out, you are going to miss the opportunity to help others who are ready. It might be late in the year before you can get the child who is dumping to put anything away.

If you work with the children who you think have the greatest possibility of success, you will have many more children putting things back and acting as role models. By the time you get to the child who is dumping everything, that child will have observed all the other children and yourself putting things away.

You'll have a greater possibility of success in the long run. I say this because I think it's human to go after the child who is making the biggest mess. It is wiser to do just the opposite. Help the children who have a sense of order and the messy child will conform much more quickly.

For future issues, please direct your questions to:

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Eating in the Prepared Environment

By K.T. Korngold

Eating is the consummate sensorial experience. It involves all our senses: seeing, tasting, smelling, feeling, and even hearing. At the Montessori Children's Center at Burke, we work at a variety of levels to make eating a beautiful, satisfying, and nurturing sensorial experience for the children and adults alike.

In each classroom the small-scale furniture—tables for eating and chairs for sitting—are specially designed for each age level. We use real silverware (pretty child-size silver-plated without logos or cartoon characters), glass pitchers for pouring, glass cups for drinking, and white china plates and bowls.

We place flowers on the table. The toddlers use place mats; the 3-6 year olds use tablecloths. As the children grow and learn, we give them more and more opportunities to participate in the food preparation, set-up and cleanup.

In everyday living, as throughout our classrooms, our goal is to help children develop independence and gain the tools needed to take care of themselves.

In the Infant Room

In the Infant room, the babies are at two different stages of development (and some are moving between the two). Adults feed some babies. Others feed themselves. The babies who are fed by adults are fed according to the baby's own individual schedule. We do not dictate the child's feeding schedule; rather we follow the child.

When giving the baby a bottle, the adult holds him in her arms: she does not prop him up, plug in the bottle and walk away to complete another task.

In these early months, we believe feeding should be a time of interaction and connection for the adult and child. The adult uses that time to look at the child and make an eye connection. She is present with the child and focuses all her attention on him. Focusing on the baby while he is eating enables the child to focus himself on the task of eating without distraction.

While we do follow the cues from the children to meet their needs for hunger, the teachers also have a sense of each child's own schedule. They are prepared to meet that need when a child becomes hungry. Rather than wait for the child's need to escalate, the teachers begin to respond to the clues early on. When a child is ready for a bottle, it is already prepared. The baby doesn't have to wait.

In this way, babies learn the direct connection between their needs and getting their needs met. They sense that this feeling is hunger. "I am hungry. This is my food. I am getting satisfied." They do not have to experience frustration in order to be fed. Therefore, they can develop trust in the world and in their caregivers; they can get to better know themselves, and recognize their own needs.

In the Infant Room, the baby who is being introduced to solids but has not yet achieved sitting is fed in an air chair. The air chair is placed on the floor, rather than on a table. We believe it is more important to keep the child grounded and for the adult to adjust her level. Therefore, the adult sits at a low stool at the child's height, rather than raising the child up to adult level for her convenience.

The teacher focuses on the child. She brings the spoon to the child's lip, waits for the child to indicate interest by opening his mouth or sticking out his tongue. She places the spoon at the tip of tongue and waits for the infant to take the food from the spoon.

Some children are fast eaters; some children are slow eaters. Each feeding is calibrated to the child's own pace and needs. From the earliest food experiences, our aim is to empower children to participate in their own feeding.

The infants are weaned directly from a bottle to a cup. We skip the sippy cup altogether. We use a small shot-glass size cup with heavy bottoms from the time the child can sit in the air chair—even as young as four months. This helps children learn to drink from a cup because that is the skill we want the child to master eventually.

We do not replace the bottle with a small cup; rather we introduce the cup for other liquids, like water or juice. Children continue to receive nourishment from the bottle and later from solid foods. As the child develops competency with the cup, we increase the size of the cup.

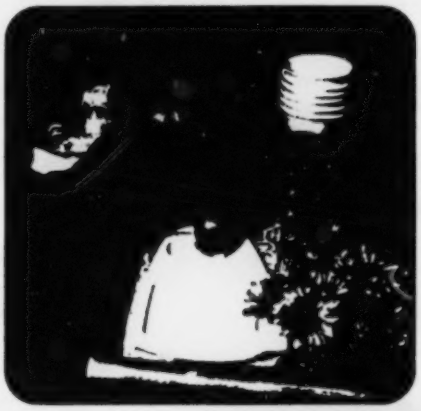
The teacher does not fill the cup to the top; rather she controls the amount of liquid to better enable the child to be successful. Although the children do have spilling accidents, we see this as an important part of the process of learning. Children learn

continued to page 6

EATING IN THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

continued from page 5

from the spill the skill of controlling the flow of the liquid in the cup. They are able to practice the skill of manipulating the cup for drinking, even at an early age.



Giving Only Necessary Help

The babies who feed themselves sit at low tables and chairs. The children's feet touch the floor. The adult sits with the children at their low table, on a low stool. The adult is not eating at this time. She observes and assists only when necessary. From the time the children are able to grasp a utensil, they are given a fork and spoon to use.

Of course, when children eat on their own, they do tend to get messy. The teachers don't make an issue of the mess during mealtime. After babies finish their meal, the focus shifts to cleanup. At the low sink, the children wash their hands, see their faces in the low mirror, and help to wash their own faces.

By using a low table and chair, and focusing solely on the child's eating (rather than on socializing), we give the child the opportunity to concentrate on the task of eating. The child of this age is learning to eat, to taste and to enjoy food. Socializing can and does happen at other times. We want the children to eat in their own time frame, at their own pace, and focus on eating only.

Toddler Room and 3-6 Class

When the children arrive in the morning, a breakfast buffet is set up so they can serve themselves if they are hungry or thirsty. The children pour their milk or juice from a small pitcher into a glass. They serve themselves waffles or cereal with a scoop, pour their milk from a small pitcher into a bowl, and spread their own cream cheese on their bagel,

using a spreader. Each child takes as much or as little as he needs.

Lunchtime is very special for the children. We recently changed our menu to include an increased variety of seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and beans, wheat breads, and an assortment of fish, turkey, chicken and pasta. The children enjoy tasting the new foods.

Everyone washes and dries their hands before they sit down at the table. The children each have their own place. One teacher sits at each table with five or six children. The food and beverages are laid out on the serving table beside each teacher. One child

from each table brings the basket of whole wheat and the butter to the table. It is then passed to each child. The children butter their own bread. The teacher passes out the serving bowls of food. The children spoon the food out themselves.

If the child needs help, the teacher will assist the child in lifting the spoon, giving only as much help as needed so the child can participate as much as possible. For the toddlers, the teacher pours the milk from a large pitcher into a smaller pitcher, with just enough milk to fill the small glass so, when the children pour, they can be successful.

The food arrives pre-cut in small enough pieces so it is manageable and not overwhelming. Because the children serve themselves, they choose how much they want. We never talk about a clean plate or insist that the children finish all their food. The children can have as much as they want, and take as much time as they need. One child may be eating desert. Another may still be eating the main meal. Another may be lying down on the cot for a nap.

Cleanup

The children clean up after themselves. They pick up their plates, walk over to the garbage container and scrape the plate with one of their utensils. The clean-up station includes three separate wash bins, one each for glasses, dishes, and silverware. The children place their items into the correct bin. When they are finished,

continued on page 7

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they go to the bathroom, change diapers and/or sit on the toilet and wash their hands.

Eating is a peaceful, calm experience for the children, without outside interruptions or distractions. At home, you can create a similar atmosphere. Turn off the TV, radio, and the ringer on the phone. Let your children's experience of new tastes and textures of foods rekindle your sense of wonder and delight at the delicious bounty of our earth and the myriad of tastes from the different cultures of our world.

Food Preparation Activities

During the day, in both the toddler room and the 3-6 room, the teachers set up individual food preparation activities, such as slicing cucumbers, using a spreader, apple coring, spreading cheese into celery, cracking nuts, peeling an egg and slicing it with an egg slicer.

The 3-6 children are more involved with food preparation. They help carry the food to the table. They do group activity food preparations including baking on Fridays. The children have made many tasty treats, including bread, applesauce, soup, pies, muffins and pizza.

In the 3-6 Room, the child prepares the snack and passes it out to his classmates. Then the child cleans up and prepares the space for the next person, which includes washing and drying everything and setting it back up for the next child.

Please and Thank-You

Toddlers are mastering the skills of eating. We believe that the best way to teach a toddler to say thank you and please is for the adult to say these herself, rather than telling or coaching the child to say it. We believe if you model grace and courtesy, the children will learn these skills. Eventually, grace and courtesy will also become natural for the children.

One of the differences between the toddler and the 3-6 room is the amount of conversation at the table. As in the toddler room, lunch is an intimate time. The 3-6 year olds eat family style, sharing their time together and their experiences of the day. Children talk amongst themselves and with the teacher. At this age, the teachers also work to help the children with grace and courtesy skills through modeling and rephrasing. For example, Molly says, "I want the milk!" The teacher, Jennifer, says, "Would you please pass the milk, Freddie?"

Children Can Help at Home

At home, you can provide opportunities for your children to be involved in food preparation and their own feeding. Designate a low shelf on the refrigerator for your children's supplies. Place a small pitcher of milk or juice there so they can help themselves. Fill containers with healthy snacks for the child to eat—raisins or other dried fruits, cut-up carrots, cucumber spears, melon balls, cheese cubes.

Designate a low shelf or drawer for your children's own plates, cups and bowls. Put silverware in separate containers, so they can easily select a fork, spoon, or knife. Children can load their own dishes and utensils in the dishwasher and put them away when they are clean.

A low child's table and small chair in the kitchen or dining room, with a low stool for yourself, gives children a place to eat the snack they prepare. This set-up gives children a quiet place to eat a meal calmly—without distractions—and allows them to fully concentrate on eating before you sit down together as a family to share your day.

Get your child involved in preparing dinner. On the weekend, your child can help make the snacks for the week ahead. The more children are involved in preparing the food, the more likely they are to eat it. Even toddlers can grate cheese, peel hard boiled eggs, crack raw eggs and beat eggs. They can cut bananas, celery, cucumbers and carrots. They can spread butter, cream cheese or jelly. They can scoop melon balls.

Under supervision, children can turn the mixer, blender, or Cuisinart on or off. They can beat and mix. They can sprinkle cheese, salt, herbs, and spices. They can grind pepper. They can rip lettuce for salad.

And best of all, children can wash or scrub just about any thing. You can provide a small wash basin for the low table. Add a vegetable brush and let your child help you!

Children Can Help Cleanup

As they do at school, children can help with cleaning up. They can wash, scrape, stack the dishwasher, wipe down the table, sweep the floor, etc. When cleanup is over, everyone has contributed to the family and to each other. Children want to be a help to you. They want to do what you do. They want to contribute. Children don't need you to do everything for them. They really need to do more themselves.

The more we safely enable them, the better able they become. As we give our children a greater role in contributing, they feel more a part of the family.

continued to page 14

Conference Review

Submitted by Hope Caprye-Boos and Sharlet McClurkin, Directors of Montessori Teacher Preparation of Spokane and Washington respectively.

More than 200 infant/toddler educators joined Magda Gerber and the RIE board for the twentieth anniversary seminar on January 17, 1999 at Pacific Oaks College.

Dr. Peter Mangione, researcher at WestEd Center for child & Family Studies in San Francisco and keynote speaker, described the seven basic RIE philosophies:

1. **Basic trust** in the child to be an initiator, explorer and self-learner
2. An **environment for the child** that is physically safe, cognitively challenging and emotionally nurturing.
3. Time for **uninterrupted play.**
4. **Freedom to explore** and interact with other infants.
5. Involvement of the child in all care activities to allow the child to become an **active participant**, rather than passive.
6. Sensitive **observation** of the child in order to understand the childs needs.
7. **Consistency**, clearly defined limits and expectations that will develop discipline.

Dr. Mangione credited Magda Gerber, child therapist, lecturer, consultant on infant care and author, as a forerunner in the modern understanding of infants. "Magda Gerber is a courageous person," Mangione claims, "because when considering adult versus infant-initiated activity, she tells adults ***don't do it.***"

The child always has a better idea than the adult. She describes the well-adjusted baby as competent, exploring, confident, peaceful, resourceful, cheerful, interested, curious, secure, focused, cooperative, initiating, involved, aware and inner-directed.

Quoting research done at the University of Kansas, Dr. Mangione pointed out that the difference between three-year-olds with a vocabulary of 300 versus 1,000 words is that parents of children with the larger vocabulary have an extensive vocabulary themselves, using a variety of words in respectful communication. They listen to their child and pick up on the child's interests.

Parents of children with larger vocabularies also use open-ended play materials that are creative and involve their children in complex conversations.

Other workshops covered topics including exploring, discovering and learning through movement, building parent alliances for securely-based infant care, mixing RIE and preschool and conflicts of pretoddler's and toddlers.

A course entitled, RIE I Basic Training, Theory and Observation: a Two-Week Intensive Course in Infant and Toddler Development and Care," will be held on Whidbey Island, WA, July 12-23. For more information contact Edna Hansen at (360341-2654 or Polly Elam-Ferraro at (805)382-1366.

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Meeting The Infant's Basic Needs For Food By Virginia Varga

For the most part, all the children in childcare centers are on bottles. A mother may send in breast milk, but basically her child is taking a bottle. At a number of on-site childcare centers around the country, mothers are able to leave their jobs, come to breast feed their baby and then go back to work.

What makes a difference between Montessori and other childcare programs is not so much what we do, but how we do it.

Margaret Ribbel, in her book ***The Rights of Infants***, tells us that "The infant's mouth is the center of the universe. The infant's mouth is the avenue through which hunger and thirst are satisfied, tension reduced and comfort restored. The infant experiences his first important tastes of his new life and his first grasp through sucking. During the first six months, it is the infant's most satisfying and absorbing activity and the one in which he becomes a wholehearted participant." (*Ribbel, n.d.*)

We see how important the mouth is in the first six months. I know from working with infants daily that they suck on everything. In some Montessori programs, teachers don't believe in pacifiers, don't give babies pacifiers or take them away. Other teachers allow them.

Establishing the First Relationship

Sucking is a very important activity in the first few months when the infant is awake. It is through this activity that the infants begin to establish a relationship with their mothers and an attachment to them. That relationship is strengthened if the mother responds appropriately to the infant's cry.

When we concentrate on the physiological connection with the psychological, there is almost a formula. The baby experiences the pangs of hunger. The baby communicates that hunger by crying. Hopefully, someone picks the infant up and interprets the cry correctly. If the basic need is hunger, the adult gives the child a bottle or the mother breast feeds the baby. Then the child feels satisfaction and rests.

Maybe an hour later, the baby feels hungry again, cries, is fed, feels satisfaction and pleasure and rests. This cycle occurs over and over. Think how many times in the first six months this cycle occurs in every child's life. For a newborn, it happens about every two hours.

Importance of Repetition

Repetition is important in these very first feeding experiences. Repetition has a strong effect on the baby. Both feeding and diapering routines influence the psychological development of the child. We believe that such early repetition lays the foundation for cause and effect thinking. This is extremely important. These cycles also help a child develop the feelings of adequacy, adult problem solving, and the basis for experiencing satisfaction and abundance.

A child of three in our toddler class exhibited totally random behavior which we thought he might grow out of. He just ran around the room. He is not retarded. We knew of no developmental problems.

He is now in the three-to-six class and the teacher is distracted because his behavior is still so random. For example, he poured some juice in his glass for his snack, and because there was some left in his glass, he poured it on the floor. On another day, he took the pitcher and poured the juice on his plate. He likes to climb on top of the table and smile. Whatever the teachers do to help doesn't seem to matter.

His parents are having difficulties as well. They have taken away all his toys for all the inappropriate activities he's done at home. They have used rewards and punishment. He just seems to lack cause and effect thinking.

Both feeding and diapering routines influence the psychological development of the child. We believe that such early repetition lays the foundation for cause and effect thinking. This is extremely important.

The parents came to me for great wisdom, for an answer. I had no answer but I said, "Tell me about his first year of life."

The parents sat up and looked at each other. "Oh," they said, "he was colicky. He cried all the time. He had projectile vomiting. He ate and then up it came. He had to be on antacids and other medicines." I took that in but it still didn't click.

This was his cycle. He was hungry. He cried. He ate and then he threw it all up. Had he missed the experience of satisfaction and rest? He repeated his cycle in his first nine months over and over. Nothing they have done has helped. I think he never developed cause and effect

continued to page 10

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MEETING THE INFANT'S BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD continued from page 9

thinking. But it wasn't his parents' fault. He had an immature digestive system. This situation is an example of the physiological system affecting the psychological system.

This child's parents revealed another bit of information—he is always hungry. He went to a birthday party and ate everything in sight. Then they went to his grandmother's and he ate a peanut butter sandwich. When they went home, he said he was hungry. He's a thin little fellow. He eats a lot and yet he's always hungry. Isn't that an amazing connection?

I told the mother to happily feed him whenever he is hungry. We communicate to infants when we're feeding them. Our response can tell children, "Your needs are okay with me. I'm going to fulfill your needs and take care of you."

I also told the mother, "When he has eaten and feels full, take him on your lap and read to him or do something that gives him the pleasure-rest cycle."

It's interesting that he wants to eat so much now. He's giving us another chance. If his mother can have a gentle attitude and not be irritated by his being hungry, it will be very interesting to see if his random behavior changes.

Lack of cause and effect thinking may not be the complete answer. But we see how important the simple activities of feeding and diapering are for a child's psychological development and the ability to learn and feel adequate. Such simple acts, repeated over and over, have a great impact on the developing personality of each child.

The Weaning Process

Beginning around three months, most babies no longer have the same need for the bottle or breast milk. Montessori experts say the weaning process should begin no later than about eight months. There are many differing ideas about weaning babies.

Rita Messineo and I put together a feeding sequence so that the parents or the caregiver in childcare programs might begin to substitute more solid foods and eliminate bottles slowly over a period of time.

Introduction to New Tastes

We begin by giving babies a sensorial experience of tasting. Remember, new tastes really aren't part of the young child's diet. We Montessorians can think of it as a tasting game and our attitude will reflect this view. If we think that the child is hungry and we have to feed them, our attitude changes.

We start with a little juice. I have read that white grape juice is a little easier to digest than apple juice. It really doesn't matter because the first experience with food is not for nutrition or meeting the need of hunger. It merely helps the child become accustomed to other tastes and textures.

Experience has shown us that if we delay this tasting experience too long, some babies will resist the change. The reaction to change varies with babies, but babies are more accepting if we start this tasting game early.

Experience has shown us that if we delay this experience too long, some babies will resist the change. The reaction to change varies with babies, but babies are more accepting if we start this tasting game early.

First, about three months, we place a few drops of juice on the mother's or the caregiver's finger. This is repeated several times a day. Use the very same juice over a period of three to five days until the baby becomes accustomed to that juice.

Later, we put a few drops of juice on a spoon. The spoon is placed on the lip because the baby still has a sucking reflex and can suck it off. This process also supports the idea that babies should always be in control of their bodily openings. We should not push spoons into the child's mouth.

If we introduce cereal or vegetables, we put the food on the table so the child can see it and know what is going to happen. If we are feeding the baby, we put the food on the spoon and hold it near the infant's mouth. We wait for the babies mouth to open and then we give the food. Babies tell you when they've had enough or need to rest. They turn their head or blow it out, for example. They communicate clearly.

Adult caregivers should respect the child's communication and stop the feeding. Sometimes the child just needs to rest before being fed again. Montessori education is based on respect. This is the way to show respect to infants during feeding.

The child soon progresses to finger foods. We can give them crackers or a piece of toast. We want them to participate as much as possible.

Demand or Scheduled Feedings

We believe children should be fed on demand. This means that when they experience hunger and communicate that need, they should be fed. When they communicate their needs, they actively participate in having their needs satisfied.

The opposite view is that adults anticipate the time for feedings and feed children before they communicate their need, as when a mother anticipates her child's every need. The child does not have to

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communicate.

This latter process can lead to the development of a passive personality, a person who expects other people to guess or to know what is needed. It is important that children communicate in some way that they are hungry or that they have a need.

At five or six months, we add breakfast. Before the child comes to the center, the child has a bottle at home. The mother can fill out a form indicating how many ounces of milk the child took. This enables the caregiver to estimate how hungry the baby may be.

In late morning, we introduce a solid such as cereal. The child would get bottles on demand for the rest of the day.

Testing For Allergic Reactions

We introduce new foods in the morning. This helps us observe any possible allergic reaction before the child is sent home. We don't mix foods. We give the infant only one food at a time. We want the baby to taste each food.

We recommend this practice for the mother at home. Then, if there's any kind of allergic reaction, it won't happen in the middle of the night.

Even around seven and eight months, the infant will likely still have a morning bottle. When children of this age wake up and are hungry, they want to be fed quickly. Now, we give the solid first and the bottle afterwards. Then a bottle and a familiar solid is given again near the end of the day. The child will have another bottle at home.

In the ninth or tenth month, the child will get a new solid and a glass of milk. First, we introduce a tiny glass with a little water or juice. Initially, you have to hold the glass to the child mouth.

Gradually, some children will begin to grasp the glass. Others will just sit there and let you hold it. You can take their hands and show them how to hold the glass so they can begin to drink themselves. We only put in a few drops because sometimes they miss and the liquid goes down their front. Gradually they become more proficient.

Around nine or ten months, the children begin to take more of their milk from a glass. So when a parent sends in a bottle, we pour the milk into a glass. The child still has a morning bottle and an evening bottle. This sequence works for some children, but not for everyone.

Jane Martin believes that in the past there was a hidden curriculum in the home that prepared children for success in school. The curriculum of the home was that children participated— they watched the mother do household chores and helped.

Around eleven or twelve months, children take most of their milk from a glass and eat mostly table food.

In most childcare programs, children old enough to be walking around still take all of their milk from bottles. Some think that if children are going to be given a bottle, it should not be propped up. We should hold the child. Some adults still hold children who are almost eighteen months old who can do many other things independently and can hold the bottle themselves.

Absorbing Our Presentations

As the children begin to walk around, from sixteen months and up, they watch you set the table and they watch their parents. They watch how you pour milk. All these are presentations. Just about every movement, every single thing we do, is a presentation for this little absorbent mind. They see you wipe off the table. Soon they are grabbing for the sponge. We let them sponge off the table even though they may not be doing all the steps of some sequence. They start with what they've seen us do.

Participating in Daily Life Activities

It is very important to let the children participate in their daily life activities. Author and philosopher Jane Martin picked up a Montessori book and became very excited. In her book, ***The Schoolhome,*** she says that Montessori is more important than ever for today's children. There is an emphasis on domesticity in the Montessori setting.

Jane Martin believes that in the past there was a hidden curriculum in the home that prepared children for success in school. The curriculum of the home was that children participated— they watched the mother do household chores and helped. Sometimes the mother would say something like, "Go upstairs, get me a diaper, bring me a box of tissues and come down." The child had to listen, carry the message in his memory, go off and bring these things back.

Learning How to Communicate

When the children had something to say or communicate, the mother was there to listen. Children had a greater experience of someone caring about communicating. They learned to communicate. They talked and learned to stop to listen. The other person responds and there is a give-and-take. As Montessorians, we say that the child absorbed all these experiences from the parent's activities around the home.

Involving The Children in Our Centers

Now think about the children who may come to us as early as six weeks old. What are these child

continued on page 12

MEETING THE INFANT'S BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD continued from page 11

absorbing in our environments that are similar to what we may have observed and absorbed when we were children? It's very important then that we provide similar experiences. As children walk, their hands are now free to carry. These young children can help us. They can help set the table, for example.

Daily Living Activities

If your center has a dishwasher, the children can help you load the dishwasher. Toddlers who arrive first can help you unload the dishwasher. If you have a washing machine, a toddler can help the teacher load or unload the machine with the napkins and towels.

Remember the story I told you about the little boy. Because he was going to stay home in the afternoon, I told the mother to let him accompany her as she did all her tasks, to involve him in everything she was doing. It seemed to her that he wanted constant attention. In this way, he can participate in all the household chores and his mother can feel that she is still getting things done.

Today, since parents put in so many hours at work, they feel they have much to catch up on at home. Many parents put their child in front of the television or a favorite video to keep them out of the kitchen while they prepare dinner or do some other task. Some childcare programs also sit children in front of a video while the adults set the table and put the food on the plates for the children. They are missing tremendous opportunities for the children to participate.

Lunchtime Activities

At Burke, toddlers set the tables for twenty children, not just placemats and plates. If someone brings flowers, the child can also place vases with flowers on the tables.

The children begin to think, "Let's see, is this the right side for the fork? Does the fork go on the left side or on the right? They begin to develop some directionality, some sense of left and right. And they are only two. This is hard for some five and six-year-olds.

When the children finish eating, they can scrape their plates. They can place their plates in a dirty dishpan. If you have a restaurant container where they can place their glasses, they can sort their glasses. They can wash their dishes but, of course, health departments will want you to wash them again. This is the kind of curriculum we should each have in our centers.

Sometimes, all this takes more time and sometimes it takes more staff. But if you have a full-day program, what's the hurry? Most children in full-day programs do not spend any more time in the classroom than they did thirty years ago when we only had half a day. In fact, when I figure out how much time the children have for free choice today, it is even less than they once had—maybe only an hour.

Using Time Well

What do we do all day long? Some people say that we have Montessori in the morning and daycare in the afternoon. In some programs, all of a sudden, at some time in the morning, someone puts all the children's food on plates, brings it to them and sets the table while they are outside playing. The children come in and sit down to eat.

Everything is done for them. Their cots are already laid out when they go to sleep. When everything is done for the children, they have nothing to do themselves as a part of their own care. Maybe that is indeed daycare.

Children can be involved in all of these activities. We have the time. We don't have to hurry for lunch. Some say that they don't have the time because that is when the caregivers schedule their breaks. Consequently the staff has all the children sitting down together by a certain time.

Use teacher preparation time to involve some of the children in these activities. Take one or two children with you when you empty the wash machine. Over a period of time, every child will have the opportunity to have these experiences. They see the adult doing the activity and they learn how these things are to be done.

Simple Snack Preparation Activities

The center of the young child's universe is the mouth. Children are oral. They love food. Anything that involves food, interests them—more than just stacking a couple of blocks on top of each other. Food-preparation activities should be available in toddler programs. If no one chooses them in a given day, that's fine.

continued to page 13

Remember, however, these activities are not to replace snacks.

In one toddler program, the teacher makes biscuit dough everyday. She keeps it in a container in the refrigerator. A little table is set up with everything needed—a rolling pin, biscuit cutters and a pan. It is all prepared and ready. A little girl kneaded the dough, rolled it out, cut the biscuits carefully and put them in a pan. The teacher then put the biscuits in the oven. We can provide playdoh or biscuit dough.

Toddlers, even older children, love to crack a hard-boiled egg, peel all the pieces off, put the egg into an egg slicer, slice it and use a fork to put it on a little plate.

When you have a food activity, it is always important to have the child complete the activity, stand up and take it to another place to eat it.

If the child can eat the food where they prepare it, they do not have to go through the programmed sequence of steps. They may do only part of the sequence and put the food in their mouth. You have to deal with space with toddlers. They need to walk some distance to sit down and eat.

In another program, a little bowl of mayonnaise was included with the egg slicing exercise. The child added the mayonnaise to the egg and squished it all together to make egg salad. They could either eat it like that or spread it on bread.

You can make many things with bread. Put bread in the oven for a short time so that it gets harder or buy bread at a day-old-outlet. Cut it in quarters. It is much easier for little children to spread. It doesn't crack or crumble. Then you can also use tiny little candy cutters with cheese. The children can cut the bread and the cheese. That becomes their snack. It is not something they can do quickly. They sit for longer times and they love it!

Children also like banana cutting very much. We cut the banana in thirds and have it all set up. After peeling it, they put the peel in a napkin and throw it away. Then they slice the banana, take a fork and put it on a plate.

Avoid Setting Limits

Generally speaking, we try not to limit access to food preparation activities. It's not—you did yours or only one at a time. Limiting food activities also affects our belief system. Many of our beliefs stem from our early experiences with food. One of the myths that we live by is that there is not enough to go around. We get this feeling that there is not enough food, there is not enough love.

When you put a food activity in the room, leave it in for a couple of weeks. Don't change it every day. If you change it every day for variety, the children will never internalize the sequence of steps or really learn how to do it. You need to give them, not variety, but sameness and the possibility of repetition.

The things that you put on the shelf on little trays or in little baskets are of secondary importance. We don't want to fool ourselves to think that these objects are the most important part of what we do with the children.

These activities may not be impressive to many adults because they don't understand the importance or significance of what we're doing. Parents may ask, "What will my child learn if they come to your program?" You may chose not to respond, "Cause and effect thinking." Most parents don't want to hear a lecture.

Nevertheless, it is important that you know the benefits of participating in this kind of community life, the kind of life that they might participate in if they were in their home.

Minimizing Opposing Behavior

Maria Montessori told us that normal development is a result of a child being supported in each of these small, individual steps toward independence. If we're aware of these individual steps toward independence and support their development, children develop normally with far fewer temper tantrums and opposition.

Testing Separation

I'm not saying that supporting independence eliminates opposition completely. It is important, after all, that two-year-olds display some opposition as they begin to realize they are not their mothers and that they are really separate people. That's one of the ways they test their separation. Each step of independence helps a child in each stage of separation.

When we feed children appropriately and acknowledge their developing skills and competency, we help them experience their own separateness and develop their own sense of personal identity and personhood. That's extremely important.

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1. Ribbel, Margaret A. (n.d.) *The Rights of Infants*
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Ginny Varga... is widely recognized as one of the leaders in the field of Infant and Toddler education. She founded one of the first Montessori programs in the country at the Gloria Dei School, Dayton, OH following her AMI/AMS preprimary training in 1961.

EATING IN THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

continued from page 7

Goals

Our goal in this approach is to nurture independence, foster a healthy attitude towards food and eating, provide positive experiences of tasting and trying new foods and, as much as possible, provide opportunities for children to participate in their own eating experience.

We aim to create environments where the child can be successful. This means not doing things at the complicated adult level, but rather breaking things down into simpler forms so that the child can master each activity. For example, when young children pour, they can succeed if we give them just enough liquid. They can pour but they cannot judge when to stop.

If children can serve themselves, but need a little help, we can guide their hands rather than do it for them. If we expect our children to do things with the same speed and dexterity as adults, the child will not succeed and the adult will become frustrated. But if we simplify the task and give them the time, the child can do a lot more.

K.T. Korngold is a writer who has published articles in Infants and Toddlers and Montessori Life. She is the mother of Sarah Korngold Whaley, who now attends the Toddler Program at Montessori Children's Center at Burke.

Benefits

The benefits of our approach can be seen every day at our center. The children are doing more independently, and feeling more confident recognizing and meeting their needs. Their ability to act independently while eating builds their self-esteem. They are respectful of each other and the precious items in their environment. They stop to enjoy the scent of a flower, the smell of the warm soup, the crunch of a carrot. They offer the products of their labor to their friends and classmates. The more we involve them, the more they do. They are learning how to eat—and they are learning how to live.

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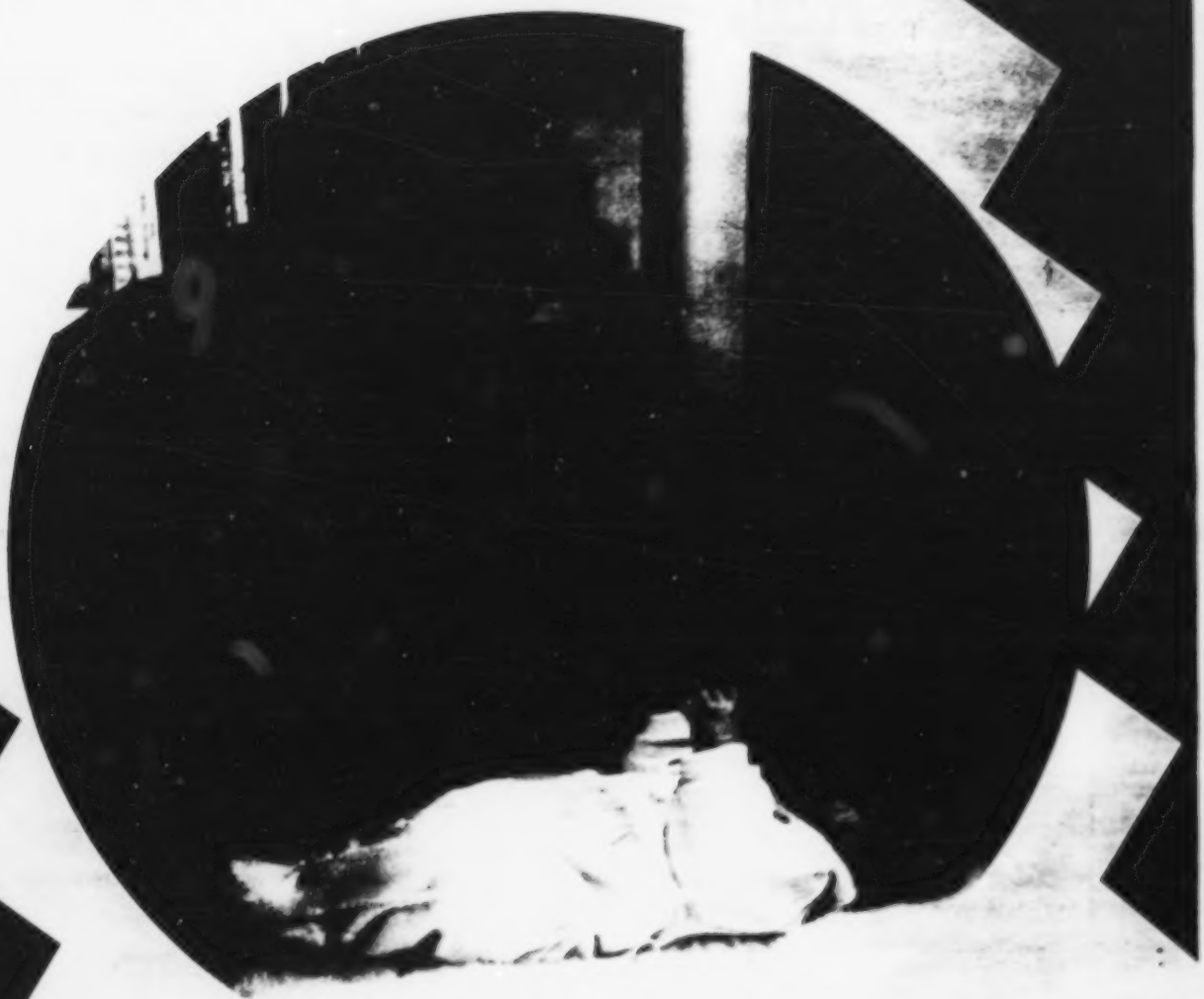

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FEATURES

5 **Sensory Awareness in Infants - Part 1**
by Patricia M. Picchetti, MD

8 **Cooking with Toddlers**
by Kathy O'Reilly

10 **Johnny Appleseed Toast, A Recipe**
by Kathy O'Reilly

DEPARTMENTS

4 **Editorial**
Spreading the Word

4 **Ask Ginny**
What Can We Do to Help Children Participate When Parents Pack Lunches?

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Editorial

Spreading the Word

The **ERIC** Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education and the National Parent Information Network has selected *Infants and Toddlers* for full-text inclusion in the **ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center)** database. The abstract and description of the articles in the journal will appear in a future issue of *Resources in Education* (**RIE**).

All the issues of each volume of the journal are entered together once a year. Once the volume is processed, articles can be accessed through the **ERIC** database on the internet. Copies of articles from the back issues are available through **ERIC's** document services.

We are pleased to expand interest in *Infants and Toddlers* journal and the Montessori approach to programs for our youngest children.

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Ask Ginny... by Ginny Varga

Q In our school, the parents pack lunches for the children. We get a lot of lunchables, juice boxes and puddings in little containers. We don't have a kitchen. We don't have a dishwasher. Food service is not an option. The children unpack their lunch boxes, put their things on the table, eat and then pack up when they are done. I'd like to do more than that, but I'm just not sure what.

A In some states there are certain limits. I ran into them myself. The health department said I couldn't use our dishwasher or refrigerator because they were not commercial units. They said I have to use paper plates and that our snacks have to be pre-packaged. So I know what you are talking about. However, we can still have individual food preparation activities for the children.

You need to think of the possibilities rather than think about the things you can't do. Brainstorm with your staff and say, "Okay, how can we have lunch and also have a little more sense of a home-like setting, with a little more grace."

What I really want to say is that you can still arrange to have the children do some things for themselves. For example, they can pour from the little carton into a glass. You now have a pouring exercise!

At Burke, someone brings flowers for the children to put in vases to set on all the tables. One child sets out placemats and napkins. All these activities take a longer time. Sometimes it takes more staff. But if you have children with you for ten hours, what is the hurry?

Learn how to work with the regulations in your state. In some states, for instance, you can use a dishwasher or air-dry dishes, but you cannot use a towel. You can use plates, glasses and silverware as long as they are air-dried.

You can also educate your parents ecologically. You educate them to understand that pre-packaged foods are expensive, wasteful and quite often filled with sugar. Many parents use reusable containers.

Even if the children bring packaged foods, send information to parents about nutrition with suggestions for snacks.

For future issues, please direct your questions to:

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Sensory Awareness in Infants — Part 1

By Patricia M. Picchetti, M.D.

Finding Montessori

While I was active in the field of pediatrics, I began to ask myself questions that a doctor does not ask him or herself. "How do children think? What are they thinking about when I come to be with them? How do they develop?"

I started to study child development. I wondered—and remember I was not aware of Montessori at that time—"Could you place a child in an environment that would be so stimulating that you could affect their development?" When I asked those kinds of questions, I realized that traditional medicine was not for me. About that time, I found Montessori.

I had actually heard of Dr. Maria Montessori, believe it or not, when I was in medical school. We learned this great tidbit of information—she was a physician who dealt with children. I remember that she asked herself questions that physicians of her time didn't ask. That was it. That's all I knew, but it sounded good.

I thought maybe I should find out more about this person. I have no idea why I ever thought of her at that point in my life. I opened up the yellow pages under Montessori to find out more. Twenty years later, here I am—a Montessori teacher, guide, or directress—whatever term you want to use.

Working with Parents and Infants

For the last eighteen years, I have been a directress of a parent-infant program. I have worked with babies and their parents in a special environment created for both of them.

When I was called about a year ago to talk about sensory awareness, I started to observe infants very closely and to gather information. I began to focus especially on how children develop their senses and how they interact with their environment.

I am a teacher just like you. I work with infants and young children just like you. I am with parents in every single class. My parents don't stay at home. They come to class with the children.

Pre-Birth to Birth

Becoming an Unborn Child

The research cited here is current—less than a year old. I am going to cover the things that you and I work with everyday—environments, inside and out, materials, activities and presentations—as a follow-up in Part 2.

The first thing I want you to do is imagine that you have become an unborn child. If you want to become a boy, that's fine. If you want to be a non-sexual entity, that's all right. Most babies in the womb start out as girls.

Think about what it might be like in your mother's womb and listen. It is warm and comforting. There is an increasing light filtering in from above. Two pulses are beating. One is slow, about 80 times per minute and one is fast, about 130 to 150 times per minute.

Vibrations can be felt. Movement is fluid. Breathing is regular and liquid. Phonation, i.e. beginning vocalization, is possible between breaths and you are one with your surroundings. The scent is sweet and familiar.

Sensory Awareness

Did you hear that each of the senses is being stimulated? It is warm and comforting—touch. The light—vision. Babies see in the womb. A pulse is beating. That's the auditory sense—hearing. Vibrations can be felt. Depending on the age of the unborn child, the child hears, first through vibrations and then through sound. Vibrations also indicate position in space and balance.

The unborn child is in a state of 4 sensory awareness and sensory development. Each sense developing in the baby has a counterpart or center in the brain

Movement is fluid. Children move very fluidly. Breathing is regular and fluid. Children breathe in the womb. They breathe embryonic fluid through their mouth and their nose. So they smell it and taste it with every breath.

I added phonation and even though that's not strictly a sense, you will soon see where this is important. Babies do make noise in the womb. They gurgle and make all kinds of sounds. They are one with their surroundings and the scents are sweet and familiar.

The Geography of Thinking

The unborn child is in a state of sensory awareness and sensory development. Each sense developing in the baby has a counterpart or center in the brain that logs and categorizes all the information that is coming in from the senses. For example, as the unborn child sees, the part of the brain in the back of the head called the occipital region is stimulated for vision. The auditory center is in the Temporal region. Here sound is perceived.

Vocalization

A center called Broca's area for the vocalization or articulation of

continued to page 6

SENSORY AWARENESS

continued from page 5

speech is located in the Frontal part of the brain. When a mother talks to her baby, that speech is different from random noise. Broca's area reproduces only sound that is language. It doesn't matter which language you speak; the child distinguishes between language and noise and imitates the language.

Listening to Mother

Behind the ear on the left-hand side of the head is that part of the brain, Warneke's area, that listens to the mother's speech. As she talks to the baby, the baby begins to comprehend the speech.

The Center for Touch

The center for touch is not only in the brain but also up and down the spinal cord. When unborn babies are very young, they sense touch only with their spinal cord. Eventually, the sensation moves up the spinal cord into the brain. We have an area in our brains, located above the ear in the parietal area, just for sensory stimuli, from all the things that touch all the different parts of our bodies.

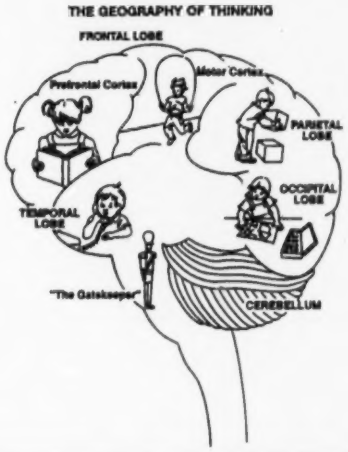
The Centers for Taste and Smell

The gustatory sense, the sense of taste, is located very deep in the center of the brain and very close to the olfactory center, which is the center for smell. If your nose is plugged, nothing tastes right. Or if you are having trouble tasting something, it doesn't always smell right. For example, when you give children cough medicine and it lies on their tongue, older children will complain that they can't smell well. Younger children may just cry or fuss. Those two centers, taste and smell, very deep in the center of the brain, are also connected to one another.

The Developing Senses

Think about how these senses are developing. In the beginning of life in the baby, each sense forms independently even though at certain weeks different senses are forming. Vision and hearing, taste and smell all form at essentially the same time, about the fifth to the ninth week in the womb.

In the unborn baby, each sense develops independently, first in the body and then in the brain. With the advancing maturity of the baby, nerves are sent throughout the body and the centers begin to connect. Then the cerebral cortex is turned on at 32-36 weeks right before the baby is born. The baby is thus prepared, both in the body and in the brain, to receive all the sensory input coming from a very sensory rich world from outside the womb.



Preparation for Birth

Now, I am going to ask you to imagine first, that you are a baby who is in the process of being born and then a baby who is newly born. Put yourself in the mind of the child once more.

Imagine that you are warm and secure. With increasing awareness, your body and that which surrounds you begins to signal a time for change. You begin to prepare for emergence. Space is at a premium. You curl up and flex yourself into the smallest little bundle. There is light but your eyes are closed. A pulse beats steadily and evenly. Vibrations are firm and warm. Breathing is regular and it's your breathing. Sucking is relaxed and you are one with your surroundings.

Entering the Outer World

You emerge into a new world. It is warm and comforting around you. There is soft light. You see images

The Geography of Thinking

Definition of Terms	Part of the Brain	Function
Frontal Lobe	near the front or anterior part of the head	
Prefrontal Cortex		logic, problem solving
Motor Cortex		movement
Parietal Lobe	near the side or wall of the head	
Sensory Cortex		sensory input
Occipital Lobe	near the back of the head	
Visual Cortex		vision
Temporal Lobe	near the temple and/or ear	
Auditory Cortex		hearing
Cerebral Cortex	mainly the cerebral hemispheres	
Cerebellum	the large posterior brain mass below the Cerebral Cortex	balance, coordination and synchronized movement
Amniotic Fluid	liquid surrounding the embryo/fetus that allows the embryo/fetus free movement and protection from injury.	

and faces. There is color and clearness close to your face. A pulse is beating and your head rests against it.

Vibrations are regular and soothing. Breathing is soft and airy. Phonations consist of tongue clucking and ummm, you are one with your mother. Her scent is sweet and familiar. Did it feel good again?

The Baby's Birth Experience

Research is showing us that birth is not the traumatic experience we once thought. In fact, people have measured babies' heart rates, breathing rates, sucking rates, the way their eyes open and close during birth, as well as their responses to pain and pleasure by measuring how much nerve activity is going on in their skin. It is generally thought now that what the mother experiences in labor is not what the baby experiences. The baby experiences what is called "a warm hug."

Gentle Birth

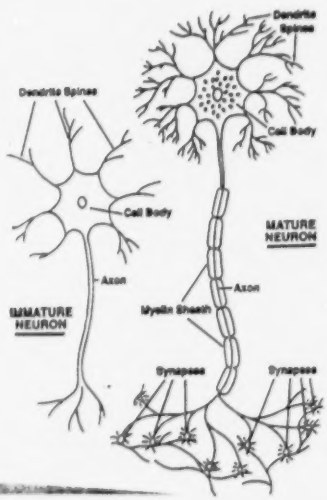
The birth I described to you is a gentle birth. The lights are low and soft. The baby is able to look around. The baby sees his or her mother right away. The pulse the baby heard was probably from being placed on the mom's abdomen where the baby can hear the mother's pulse. Or maybe the baby's head is up by the mother's chest and the baby is picking up the sound transmitted from the mother's heart.

The vibration is mom breathing in and out. Since the baby is on her abdomen, the baby is going up and down. Plus, the baby isn't crying in a gentle birth, so the breathing of the baby is felt as vibrations, in and out, very soft and regular.

Newborn babies, if they are delivered very gently, do not cry at birth. They're alert. They're awake. They look around and they talk. They cluck their tongues and they say things like ummmm, just within thirty seconds of being born. Some babies do this when not even the whole body is born. Very interesting!

Mother's Scent

The baby is one with the mother and her scent is sweet and familiar. The baby could already be at the breast or be nuzzled right between her breasts. Research shows that the baby knows her scent already, within one minute of birth, from all the other women or men in the room.



The Developing Neuron: Where Learning Begins

The immature neuron or nerve cell often has its origin in a location of the body different from its mature form. This neuron changes shape, lengthens, forms a myelin sheath (for conduction) and develops synapses or connections to other cells.

The mature neuron has dendrite spines that receive information from other cells. This is transmitted to the cell body which then sends a message down the axon to synapses near or far from the original cell.

In the First Year of Life

Developing Visual Acuity

From birth into the whole first year of life, the senses of the child are alive and functioning. Visual acuity at first is nearsighted. That is why I said that the baby had clear vision with closeness to the face. They see the best between twelve and eighteen inches. It takes about three months after birth for their visual acuity to become 20/20. Think about it. When a mom is nursing her baby, her face is about twelve to eighteen inches away. Nature built that in.

Take it one step further. If you were going to create a material in your environment for a child who is less than three months of age, would you hang it up at the ceiling? No! They can't see it. You have to get close or mom has to hold whatever is stimulating close to the baby.

From Black and White to Color

Newborn babies see in color. Black, white and gray are very clear and concise, but color is also there. How do we know that? Studies have been done on the eyes for the development of rods and cones. The rods in the eyes help us see black, white and gray. Cones are special cells that turn on for the perception of color.

Cones are present at birth but they are not fully mature. Color is there, but it is hard to separate out one color from the next. Colors appear to blend together. It is as if you are looking through a semi-transparent window. Color acuity develops about six month of age when red becomes distinct.

Red, then Blue, then Yellow

I remember taking my daughter to Marshall Field's in Chicago. We were in the baby department and there

continued to page 11

Cooking with Toddlers

By Kathy O'Reilly

Cooking is one of the children's favorite activities because it not only meets one of "the basic needs of man" (food), it is also what grownups do. When children cook, they are developing concentration, a sense of order, coordination, and independence. As an added bonus they are learning language (names of tools, ingredients, actions, as well as descriptions), math on a sensorial level (measurement, volume, fractions) and science (how ingredients change when heated, where ingredients come from).

The single portion recipes are popular because each child performs every step of the recipe—"all by myself!" Each step is set up on a tray with the necessary equipment and a picture/word card with the direction is placed directly behind it.

The teacher demonstrates the recipe, then allows the children to take turns preparing the recipe. If a child needs assistance, the adult stands behind the child and lets the child hold the tool as the adult gently lays her/his hands on top of the child's to guide them. Standing behind the child keeps the adult out of the child's line of vision, and by holding the tool, the child can still feel like "I did it myself!"

In addition to the daily food preparation activities, cooking has been a weekly activity in the 3-6 classes at The Montessori School of Huntsville in Huntsville, Alabama for at least 16 years. When the toddler class was started several years ago, they also began cooking each week.

The elementary students have a kitchen where they are able to cook

1) Use an apple peeler/corer/slicer to prepare the apples for the recipe. The apples can also be thinly sliced with a knife.

2) Butter one slice of bread.

3) Place apple slices on the bread.

Finger Play

Way up in the apple tree (stretch arms up and out like a tree)
Two little apples looked at me (hold hands around eyes like binoculars)
I shook the tree just as hard as I could (pretend to shake the tree)
Down came the apples (wave fingers as you move hands from over the head to the ground)
Mmmmm, they were good! (rub abdomen with both hands)

Source unknown

8

on a daily basis. As so many parents work outside the home now and fast food has become the norm, it becomes even more important for teachers to provide children with opportunities to prepare fresh, wholesome foods.

This really came to our attention several years ago when one of our four-year-old children was very adamant that "French fries don't come from potatoes; they come from McDonalds!" Needless to say, everyone learned about potatoes, how they grow and the many ways they can be prepared.

In the accompanying photographs, children in Shaheen Rahman and Lynn Warnke's toddler class at MSH enjoy preparing and eating "Johnny Appleseed Toast".

This is one of several recipes from Kathy O'Reilly's book, *Cooking With Children Can Be Easy: The Complete System for Single Portion Recipes*, which she has adapted for toddlers. (See page 10 for this recipe.)

4) Drizzle the slices with honey
5) Sprinkle with cinnamon
6) Enjoy a delicious, nutritious snack after baking it in the oven (or toaster oven) at 375° for 8-12 minutes.

Kathy O'Reilly, author of ***Cooking With Children Can Be Easy:*** *The Complete System for Single Portion Recipes*, is an AMS certified Montessori teacher who has been cooking in the classroom since her internship more than 20 years ago. The manual is being used in a variety of programs, from boy/girl scouts to children's museums and special education programs in more than 40 states and 10 foreign countries.

Her children's cooking classes at local schools, the botanical gardens, and the University of Alabama Kid's College have been very popular. So are her workshops at regional and national teachers' conferences.

Kathy has been a teacher at the Montessori School of Huntsville (MSH) for fourteen years and was also an administrator for eight years. She is now assisting the new administrator as the school works to consolidate its three campuses on its 11 acres.

MSH, a non-profit, parent-board run school established in 1965, received NAEYC accreditation last year. The school accepts students from 18 months to 12 years of age.

For more information, Kathy can be reached at 1304 McCullough Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35801 or call her at (256) 534-2155.

continued to page 10

Johnny Appleseed Toast

Celebrate Johnny Appleseed Day September 28th

Direction Card Sequence

1. Butter — 1 slice bread
2. Slice — 1 apple
3. Place — apple slices on bread
4. Drizzle — with honey
5. Sprinkle — with cinnamon
6. Place — on baking sheet
7. Bake — in 375° oven for 8-12 minutes

Shopping List for 20 Children

—2 loaves of bread (offer choices such as whole wheat, raisin, etc.)
—2 sticks butter or margarine (softened)
— 6 medium apples
— 1 fluid cup honey
— 1 tablespoon cinnamon
— 6 feet foil

Station Set-Up for Equipment

Place 6 saucers and foil (cut into 6" x 6" squares; fold one end up 1/2" for name), and a ballpoint pen to the left of the tray for Step 1.
Step 1: Tray, butter dish, small butter knife, paper towel for messy fingers
Step 2 & 3: Cutting board, medium bowl for apples, serrated knife
Step 4: Tray, squeeze bottle for honey, damp washcloth for sticky fingers
Step 5: Tray, spice bottle or can with sift holes
Step 6: Two baking sheets
Step 7: Oven, pot holders

Notes: Before class, wash, cut and core apples before class. Keep one to cut at demonstration to show children halves and quarter's. Cut straight across when coring so the apple will have a flat surface the children can lay on it when slicing—it won't wobble as much.

Discuss Before

1. Which ingredient is a spice (cinnamon—very concentrated flavor, only takes a little)
2. Where honey comes from (honey bees)
3. How bread is made (mix flour, yeast, water and other ingredients, knead, let rise and bake)
4. Different colors of apples (yellow, green, red)

During

1. How many 1/4s make a whole (4; 1/4 means 1 of 4 equal parts)
2. What drizzle means (to squeeze just a little out very lightly)
3. Where cinnamon comes from (the bark of the Laurel tree)
4. Other kinds of sweeteners (maple syrup, molasses, sugar, corn syrup)
5. How we like to taste sweeteners –very concentrated, only use a little.

After

1. Change in the apple's texture after cooking (firm to soft)
2. Other ways to eat apples (raw, baked, pie, muffins)

References

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2. *Johnny Appleseed* by Stephen Kellog
3. *Apples and Pumpkins* by Annie Rockwell
4. *Picking Apples and Pumpkins* by Amy & Richard Hutchings,
5. *The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree* by Gail Gibbons
6. *The Bee Tree* by Patricia Polacco
7. *The Amazing Apple Book* by Paulette Bourgeois
8. *An Apple a Day: Over 20 Apple Projects for Kids* by Jennifer Storey Gillis

Activities:

1. Go to an orchard to pick your own apples.
2. Have an apple tasting fair. Make a graph of the children's favorites.
3. Dry apple slices (*The Amazing Apple Book, page 21*).
4. Make a matching activity of the four basic types of apples sold in the United States (Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Red Rome, Granny Smith). Buy two of each to match and additional apples for each for the children to taste. Discuss the different shapes, textures and tastes. Make name cards for each kind. If possible, cut out color photographs from magazines to put on cards. Add a new type of apple every 3 or 4 days.
5. Make dried applehead puppets or dolls (*The Amazing Apple Book, page 38*).
6. Slice one apple in half vertically and another horizontally. Compare the designs in the centers. Use them for making apple prints with paint.
7. Cook apples in a crockpot and make apple sauce for the Pear or Apple Parfait recipe in ***Cooking With Children Can Be Easy;*** *The Complete System for Single Portion Recipes*, by Kathy O'Reilly.

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SENSORY AWARENESS

continued from page 7

were toys on a shelf. She was six months old. She pulled all the red toys off the shelf and threw them on the floor while I was talking to the saleslady. Since I am a dutiful mother, I picked up all the toys and I put them back before I turned away. When I looked back again, there were all the red toys pulled off the shelf all over again. So I thought, "This is interesting."

I followed-up by taking identical red, blue and yellow toys to show her. Time after time, with no mistake, she picked out the red even when the toys were identical in size and shape. Blue is perceived at nine months; yellow at twelve months.

If you are a Montessorian, how do you lay out the first box of color tablets? First you lay out the red, then the blue and finally, the yellow. Montessori knew. She knew that is how the child perceives color when she created a presentation for color to fit the child's development.

Hearing

Hearing is also very acute in the newborn. The infant can localize the mother and the father, and differentiates mother from father, even before birth and then again after birth.

Mother's Voice

The newborn baby less than ten minutes old can pick his or her mother's voice out from a room full of women, all talking at the same time. The baby will turn its head and search for the mother until he or she hears that voice and then stares at the mother.

The higher pitch of the mother's voice signals to the baby, even before the baby is born, that learning is going to occur. The baby learns to wake up and pay attention because this lady is going to do something right now. Babies become very active when moms talk. Even unborn babies love to learn. Studies show that babies learn in the womb. So if you think you are going to start teaching at birth, you are already late—nine months or ten months too late.

Father's Voice

The higher voice of the mother signals learning. The lower voice of the father signals the baby to become calm and restful. So if you are expecting, or if you have a friend who is expecting, and you are having one of those nights when all the baby wants to do is jump around, have daddy go real close to your belly and talk softly. The baby will go to sleep. That is one reason we need men in our environments—to carry the babies once they are born and help them go to sleep. That's why moms, in the middle of the night, say, "Dear, can you get up? I have fed—or changed or whatever else. You need to help the baby go back to sleep." Many of us do this without understanding why it works so well.

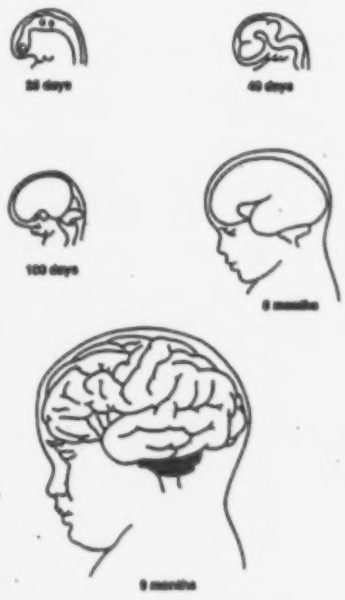
Mother's Taste and Smell

The senses of taste and smell develop very close together in time. We have already said that their centers in the brain are next to each other. These are called survival senses because they help the baby find the mother's milk and to drink it. If they can't find mom's milk, they are not going to make it.

Mother's Milk Preferred

Recent studies indicate that a newborn prefers mother's milk above all else. If you give a newborn less than fifteen minutes old mother's milk, cow's milk and different kinds of formula, the baby will spit out all the other milks in order to have mom's milk again. The baby will consistently go back to the mother's milk.

Now it is true that little babies will drink anybody's breast milk—their mother's, anybody else's mother's, a wet nurse's. That's why wet nurses were so prevalent during part of our history. But, if given a choice, they will always return to their mother's milk first. They will only take another mother's milk if their mother's milk is not available, or if they may



Brain Development Before Birth

In embryonic life the brain begins as a collection of cells. These cells locate themselves laterally along a neural plate. From here, the plate elongates, widens and begins to fold into itself. A tube is formed called the neural tube. This tube then grows longer in both directions and then begins to fold or form the distinct brain areas of hindbrain, midbrain, and forebrain. With increasing maturity, the fetus delineates function for each part of the brain as it continues to grow. With greater clarity, the cerebral cortex becomes the most prominent area of the forebrain, increasing its surface area further through folds, valleys and indentations.

continued on page 12

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SENSORY AWARENESS

continued from page 11

starve if they don't get something.

The tastes of sweet, salty and sour are all operational at birth. Human milk has a form of sugar in it, a form of salt and it has no sour. Lack of a sour element is one of the reasons why the child prefers human milk.

Touch

Touch is the sense that has the most nerve sites in our body and receives the most stimuli. Touch is extremely sensitive at birth. That is why we don't hold these little babies upside down. That is why we shouldn't smack their little bottoms. Their sense of touch is extremely acute. It is this sense that aids them in proprioception. In other words, their sense of touch helps them figure out where they are in space—"Am I falling or am I in my mother's arms, and where am I in her arms, at her breast or up on her shoulder or am I lying across her lap?"

Temperature Regulation

Touch helps with temperature regulation. The baby has a temperature center in the deep, deep center of its brain but it is not mature yet so touch has to do its work. Babies can't sweat but their sense of touch will tell them if they are too cold or too hot. Then they will try to wiggle themselves around until they get to a more comfortable temperature. Finally, they will cry so that you will take off some of the blankets, some of the swaddling, some of their clothes.

Muscle Tone

The sense of touch helps with the baby's muscle tone. It tells the muscles when to contract and when to relax. And most importantly, the sense of touch helps the child have a sense of well being. When touch is gentle, the child feels, "I am okay." When touch is not so gentle, the baby senses that something is wrong either with me or with something outside me that is directly affecting me.

Relationship to Intellectual Development

There was a study by Chicago psychologist, Amanda Woodward, in Cognition Journal. She reported, "Research over the last ten years proves that most of the brain develops after birth when billions and billions of connections are formed between brain cells. They form a neural network in the brain for vision, hearing, learning, memory and higher thinking capacities."

Researchers always assumed that intellectual development did not begin until the age of one, that children weren't intellectually capable until they uttered their first word. Now, research has proven that babies are absorbing cues from the environment through their senses long before the first word is uttered. Does that sound familiar? Not only is sensory awareness important for the body, but also it is important for the development of the intellect.

Research Validation

We have already said that the brain is forming all kinds of interconnections which occur at different times and at different ages depending on which skills the baby is learning or what the baby is trying to accomplish.

Dr. Harry Chugani at Wayne State University and also at UCLA used PET (Positronic Emission Tomography) scans, a non-invasive way to study which areas of the brain are working. PET scans monitor temperature regulation. You can scan the brain to see literally which areas are hot and, therefore, functioning.

Chugani did his work developmentally by age. His research bears out everything we have been talking about the senses—and pretty

continued to page 13

Three Brains in One

The human brain is the culmination of evolutionary progress. It bears vestiges of its ancestors in form and development. The human brain can be thought of in three distinctive parts: hindbrain, midbrain and forebrain. Embryologically, this is how the brain is formed, i.e. from back to front.

The hindbrain is responsible for immediate response to outside stimuli. Temperature, touch and survival instincts can be located here.

The midbrain is characteristic for autonomic or automatic responses in the body. Breathing, crying, lactating and emotional responses are situated here.

The forebrain is the most extensively developed part of the brain in humans. Thought, problem solving, reasoning and language production are all located here.

much everything that Dr. Montessori said about the senses almost a hundred years ago. Chugani's study shows that the sensory area of the brain gets tuned up, or gets hot, at less than one month of age. That's the area in the parietal lobe above the ear that takes in sensory stimuli from all parts of the body.

The motor area of the brain turns on about two months of age. The visual area of the brain is turned on from birth but it peaks at three months. I mentioned earlier that at three months visual acuity is 20/20 so that matches.

Memory

The hippocampus, the actual center of the brain responsible for memory, functions at eight to nine months. Any of you who work with babies know that right around the eighth to ninth month, children have memory of what they've done. It's not delayed. They don't always remember from day to day but they do remember what you show them until they imitate it.

The Prefrontal area of the brain, the area for forethought, logic and problem solving located in the very front, is operant from sixth months of age to twelve months of age. The amazing thing about this area is that it is working at twice the rate of the adult brain and is using twice the amount of energy compared to an adult brain.

Auditory Activity and Language

Patricia Kuhl of the University of Washington studied the auditory cortex of the brain, the area of the brain that receives sound. Then she studied those areas of the brain that receive language. Kuhl actually drew auditory maps of the active and inactive areas.

Her maps show that the auditory area of the brain is very active from the newborn period all the way up to the first birthday. The baby is hearing all the sounds and all the language he or she needs to eventually produce that first word.

In The Second Year of Life

Vocabulary Building

Janellen Huttenlocker, of the University of Chicago, did an interesting study for those of you who work with older infants and toddlers. She studied language reception by the child, vocabulary and complex sentence structures.

She divided her population into two groups. She told the mothers of one group to talk to their babies all the time and to tell them any words they wanted to—from things like table and chair to very complex vocabulary words. She told them, "Don't think that your baby won't understand anything. Just talk." In the control group, she asked them just to talk baby talk. She instructed them, "Just say what you think they might understand and mimic their language."

What she found was that at twenty months of age, when she measured vocabulary, the twenty-month-olds who were talked to all the time with rich vocabulary, spoke 131 words more than the control group. That is a lot. That is a tremendous amount.

Then she measured the same children in the two groups again at two years of age. Now the group of children that was vocabulary rich used 295 more words than the control group. So it is important that we talk to our children. Their brains need to be stimulated and we need to talk about everything. Talk about how you feel. Talk about anything.

Complex Sentence Structure

Huttenlocker also did another study about complex sentence structures. In one group, she asked the mothers to speak in complex sentences. In other words, she asked them to use pronouns, objects of prepositions, conjunctions, all the complex parts of speech. She asked the mothers in the control group to be very simplistic, using one and two word sentences. Each group contained 100 mothers.

She found in the group which was very rich in sentence structure, in which forty percent of the mothers used complex sentences, 35 percent of their two year olds used the same complex sentences—pronouns, objects of prepositions, conjunctions—everything that their mothers used. It is interesting what children take in.

The Formation of the Brain

Another interesting point—one researcher commented that the brain is very precocious. Now, I have heard children called precocious, but not brains. His point was that brain cells start in a different place in the body. They start in the region of our lower buttocks when we are developing in the womb. Then the cells make a long journey up our spinal cord to reach the brain.

Once the cells are in the brain, they have to travel to the area where they will function. Some of the cells go to the visual cortex, or the auditory center, or the thinking and logic center, or to the motor center and so on. We don't know why but the cells know why. When they get to the correct area of the brain, they change. They mature and then interconnect with all of their neighbors. Soon the brain cells interconnect from one half of the brain to the other.

The Function of the Two Hemispheres

One myth I want to dispel is that the right side of the brain does one thing and the left side of the brain does another. People blame some children for being either language rich or mathematically rich while the rest are artistic. Current research is showing us that this is not true.

continued to page 14

SENSORY AWARENESS

continued from page 13

There are actually areas of the brain on both sides that help with all those qualities. So, mathematical computation is not only on the left side of the brain, it is also on the right. The ability to be artistic and to see in three-dimensional pictures is not only on the right. It is also on the left. All this is due to the interconnections that are formed in the first two years of life.

Conclusion

So that is the theory and the research. Now, how do we use this information as teachers? What does it tell us? We know now infants are fully prepared to receive, log and categorize information. We know now that there are sensory sites in the brain for each of the senses. We know that the senses are connected to one another in the brain and that they affect the action of the child in the outside world.

This information tells us that we must create a sensory rich environment for these children—not only an environment that calls to their senses, but also an environment that allows them to act out what their senses receive.

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Editor's Note: In the next issue of *Infants and Toddlers*, ***Sensory Awareness, Part 2,*** will cover suggestions for practical applications of this information in classroom environments and at home for our youngest children.

A trained pediatrician, Patricia M. Picchetti, M.D., is AMS Certified for Birth to 3 and 3-6. She is an AMS Consultant and Accreditation Member, as well as AMS presenter nationally and regionally. Patricia is a Visiting Professor for Concordia University's Department of Educational Research and Administration. She is a member of Loyola University's Department of Pediatrics Family Home Visit Program.

Dr. Picchetti is a Lecturer and Consultant for the MECA-Seton Teacher Preparation Training. She is also the Directress for Seton Montessori School's Parent-Infant Program.

Patricia insists that the most important role that she has is being a parent for her four children.

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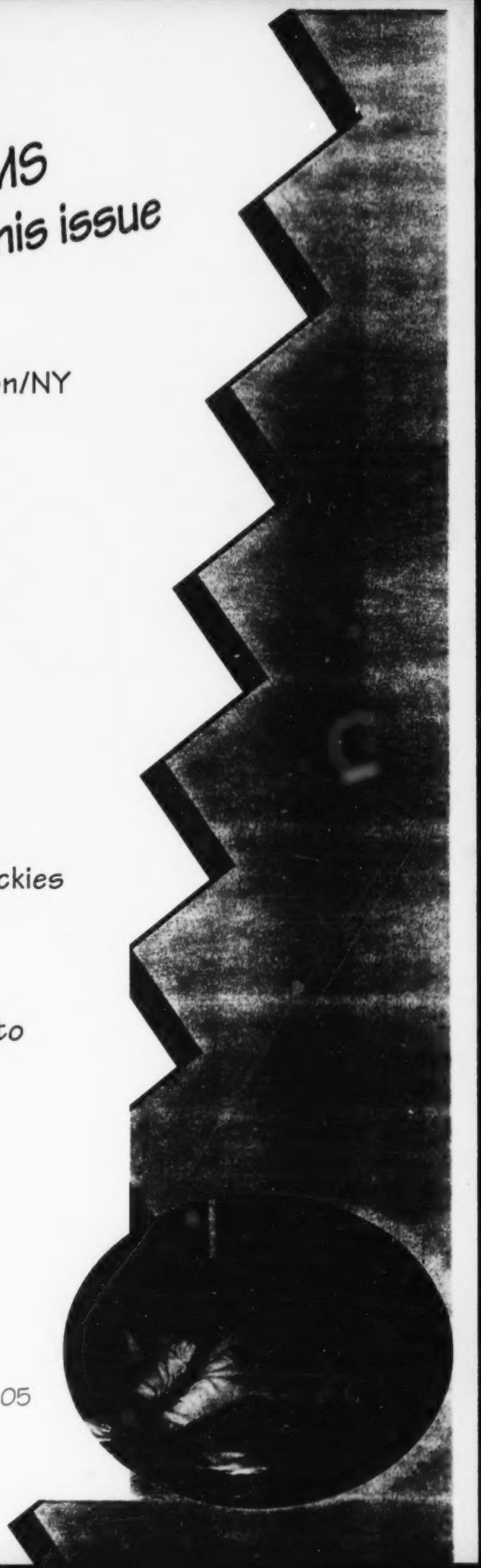

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FEATURES

5 **Sensory Awareness in Infants - Part 2**
by Patricia M. Picchetti, MD

8 **Oooo La La! Making French Bread**
Story and photos by Lillian DeVault Kroenke

10 **Caring for Toddlers**
submitted by
The Center for Montessori Education/NY

DEPARTMENTS

4 **Editorial**
Looking to the Future

4 **Ask Ginny**
What Is the Difference Between Montessori Infant Child Care and Regular Infant Child Care?

Editor: Lillian DeVault Kroenke

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Maria Gravel
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Editorial

Looking to the Future

I look forward to the future of *Infants and Toddlers.* As most of you already know from experience, it takes time for any new project to reach its audience and become financially self sufficient.

I don't expect to add additional issues each year, but my first goal is to expand the size of each issue by four pages at a time. That means adding one more feature each issue.

We are getting closer each year as our advertising increases, as new subscriptions come in, as you renew your subscriptions and as the word spreads to more schools, parents and to other early childhood educators.

We continue to receive encouragement and accolades:

- Our teachers love your journal!
- We want to order additional copies to share with our staff.
- I decided to extend my subscription for three years so I don't miss any issues.
- The journal gets just keeps getting better and better.

Thanks to all of you for your continuing enthusiasm and support!

Lillian DeVault Kroenke

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Ask Ginny... by Ginny Varga

Q What is the difference between Montessori infant child care and regular infant child care?

A The difference is not just meeting the needs of infants, but how we do it. People often remark, "Well, all you do is change diapers, give bottles, love and hold the infants. Can't anyone do that? Why do you have to take a teacher education course?"

Yes, it does seem simple enough to the people who ask these questions.

When we look at Montessori philosophy, we readily acknowledge that the infant has an unknown potential which will develop as the child interacts with the environment. These environmental experiences either help or hinder the child's development.

We also believe that the child has a special type of mind that enables the child to take in the world in a wholistic way—like a camera.

Along with this absorbent quality of the mind, the young child experiences sensitive periods for movement, order and language. Therefore, the qualities of the child's experience are extremely important to the child's development.

Finally, we believe that the very core of Montessori theory is revealed by the fact that normal development occurs as a child develops successive steps of independence.

Dr. Montessori tells us that normal development is simply experiencing very small sequential steps to independence.

Helping the child with these successive steps to independence is the core of what we do. So some days when we adults are caring for infants and we are concerned about getting everyone diapered quickly and efficiently, we forget that the most important thing we do is make sure that the child is involved.

We need to move slowly so that each infant has the possibility of participating in each activity, or at least, seeing and feeling what is happening to him or her.

The core of Montessori theory and practice is the development of independence. Keep this thought daily in mind as you care for each child.

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Sensory Awareness in Infants — Part 2

By Patricia M. Picchetti, M.D.

Montessori often spoke of nature and that really is the key. Nature reveals the built-in cues for stimulating sensory awareness. Nature also provides the format—the place for the child to act from those stimuli into the outside environment. The child comes from nature. Nature and the child are one.

So as teachers, what can we do? In this article, I am going to present ideas and suggestions that you can use both indoors and outdoors. I am going to be very practical and consider what kinds of activities and materials you need in your environments and at home.

Take Montessori Outside

We must observe nature. We must prepare our environment for these really young children. How do we do that? First, we can take the children outside. That's easy. It doesn't cost any money. You can do this immediately.

I have a dream that all Montessori schools could be outside. I wish we could take everything from inside and go outside all day long, all year long. Have you ever noticed how children learn outside? It's amazing. If you have a child who cannot be calm inside, go outside. Don't stick to a schedule. Just go. The children need you. They have a need to be in nature. Take them there.

I have been to schools where the environment is outside nine months of the year. That is the longest period I've seen. There are always three months of either intense heat or intense cold in most locations. I wish we could be outside all the time. We need to go outside. The children need to observe nature. They need to touch. They need to learn and to interact.

Since we can't be outside all the hours of the day, every day of the year all year round, what is the best we can do? Well, the longer the children are with you each day, the more time you can allow for the children to be outside. If the children are with you all day or you have an extended day period, let the children go outside as much as possible.

Allow Flow to the Outside

There can be a flow from the inside to the outside. If you come to Clarendon Hills and my Parent-Infant environment, you will see that we do not close the door. People say, "You're nuts. Don't you want to put a hook on the door? Don't you want to dead bolt your door or, at least, put in a screen door or something?" No! We leave the door open. The children can freely decide to be indoors or outdoors when they want. When they want to go out, they go out. When they feel like coming in, they come in. If they never want to come in, that's all right.

My environment is wonderful! You will see the pictures. I work hard at it. But the children belong outside. And if they want to go out, they go out. It's a hard concept for parents to understand because they think they paid their money for their children to be indoors. I tell them that they paid their money so the children can go outside as much as possible.

"Mental development is a process of awakening. The child needs to be aroused by outside stimuli. Light and sound, smell and taste and touch, form and figure and landscape appear and call to the child."
Maria Montessori

Bring the Outdoors Inside

The outdoor environment must also come inside. If infants are so sensitive to the natural environment that surrounds them, we need to make a special effort with our indoor environments too. Remember that these children absorb everything. They can't help it. They are rich in the ability to seek out what is best for the development of their potential. Therefore, our environments must complement and encourage natural education.

How do we do that? That's easy. You already know how and it doesn't have to cost any money either. Just collect some wild flowers. I collected weeds one year. We put them in little vases. The children love to look at them.

Use a basket for collections that the babies have gathered. Did you ever give a basket to a baby who is crawling? They find everything—every rock and pebble you can imagine. These are precious to them. Collect them. This is nature. Bring the collection inside.

In your inside environment, add natural decor such as wreaths or

continued to page 6

SENSORY AWARENESS

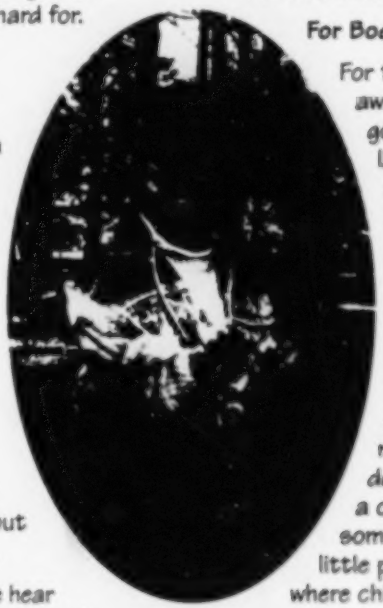
continued from page 5

garlands that you make from natural materials. Collect the materials with the children. If you need to dry them, fine. Then put them together and place them in the environment.

Collect samples of the harvest. Use fresh fruit and vegetables in your environment. Forget the cans. Bring natural materials like pine cuttings, flowering branches or forced bulbs inside. These things can co-exist and coincide with all of your tables, your chairs and your shelves. They have the same worth as all the things that you paid money for, all the things you work so hard for.

A Respect for Nature

We also need to kindle a respect for nature in the children. By doing this, we also respect the child because, remember, the child comes from nature and is a part of nature. How do you do that? When we go outside and see a flower blooming, for example, we watch with respect and we talk about how beautiful nature is.



At Seton Montessori, we hear the cardinal's song year round. It's really wonderful. When we hear a cardinal's song, or a male and a female cardinal singing to each other, we listen. We wait for the song to end. The babies will sit there and listen. They know the mom's song from the dad's song. They are different. The older children will tell you.

When we smell new rain—and we get a lot of rain where we are—we touch the puddle. We become aware of how precious water is just by touching a puddle. When we taste a ripened fruit, we recall the tree that gave us its fruit and we thank that tree for that fruit. When we feel the breeze outside—and any of you who have been to Chicago know we have a lot of breezes, some big, some little—we remember what our mother's breath was like that flowed against our cheeks. This is nature.

Sensory awareness is so rich in these youngest of children. These lessons are really lessons for life. If we learn with them, it will also teach us our lessons for life too.

For the Outside Environment

For Body Awareness

For the sense of body awareness, which goes together with language, you need a natural path to walk on. Again, this is free. You need a terrain that changes so the children gain a sense of up and down. It would be nice if you had a deck or a patio or a courtyard, something simple, a little place outdoors where children can explore.

You need gardens, gardening plots, tubs or pots—anything you want to use as long as the children can garden with something. You need a small garden path. Many of us make beautiful small gardens and the children cannot get into them. And then we get upset because they get muddy. Or we get upset because they step on the flowers or they trample the new tomato plants or whatever. Make a path in the garden that just fits their feet so they can walk into the garden. This path could be hay or straw. You could get brick—which would be fancy—or it could be just flat rocks. Something like that.

The children need tools to till the earth. It would be nice if the tools had wooden handles and metal implements, although in England I saw tools for children that were all metal—stainless steel. They never rusted. You could wash them and they were light. Those would be very nice.

You need small gloves, buckets, watering cans and water spigots. Metal is more durable than plastic and the children enjoy it. I prefer to use metal implements as much as possible.

You need implements with wheels—wheelbarrows and wagons—that the children can fill to clean the gardens. You need rakes, shovels and brooms. Initially, just to push and pull, but eventually, to care for the outdoor environment.

The children need benches to sit on to observe nature. That is their silence—a place to sit. That's body awareness.

For Visual Awareness

For visual awareness, there should be bird feeders or troughs for animal care so the children can feed the wildlife and then observe it. Birdhouses are nice for visual awareness. Children can observe family life and how parents care for their young. Little babies are very aware of all this. Don't think it is beyond them. You will be very surprised.

You can have bee houses. This past summer we had ladybug houses and I was amazed how gently the infants picked up the ladybugs. They didn't squish them the way older people do. They were very gentle. The ladybugs were running on their

fingers, in between their fingers and eventually, they went back to nature. We talked about how ladybugs only live two weeks. One of the older children asked if, after two weeks, would they come back again as a baby. We talked about that.

One school has bat houses so the children could observe bats. And, of course, there are butterfly gardens. A meadow garden would be beautiful.

For Sound Awareness

For sound awareness, there are outdoor wind chimes. These can be very simple. You can make your own with pieces of wood, shells or something like that. Just this summer I saw a garden sculpture with gentle little brass bells. When the wind went through these little brass bells, it made the most beautiful little sound. I had to listen carefully but the babies hear it more readily. Remember, their hearing is better than ours!

You need trees for shade, color and coolness, but also so the children can listen to the wind moving through the leaves, crinkling the leaves.

For Taste and Smell

For taste and smell, you need gardens for flowers and produce. You need fruit and blossoming trees and bushes. You need fragrant evergreen trees and bushes because the children will notice that there are trees that do not loose their needles. The differences fascinate the children. This last winter in Chicago, we had tons of snow and the branches of the pine trees began to stick out in the bushes. The children noticed right away that they still had their leaves.

For Tactile Awareness

For tactile awareness, you need rain, snow, sand and earth to touch. All these are free. I visited a school where the whole outdoor environment was sand. It was absolutely wonderful. I had fun watching the children. For tactile simulation, you need rocks, stones, pebbles, shells and even fossils to feel the texture, to pick up and to collect.

For Body Position in Space

For body position in space, rather than body awareness, you need a natural path such as slate for walking and balance. It is very difficult for us to walk on slate, but children get it right away, especially if they are barefoot. You need natural climbers. At one school, they use haystacks. We use logs. We cut them and put them in the earth at different heights to make a log mountain. It's fun.

Another thing that is free in nature is a small hill for walking up and sliding down. You don't need a climber. You don't need to buy a slide. Hills work great in the winter with sleds.

You need very low trees with treehouses built low to the ground. A small cottage to hide one's body would be nice. For the older infants, add a tree swing or a tree ladder. I saw a tree pulley at one school. That was neat. They put various weights of sandbags on one end. The infants that are walking and at the age for strength and lifting heavy things pulled these heavy weights. They loved these little pulleys. It was just a rope thrown over a tree. Very interesting and very simple!

Moving Indoors

For Body Awareness

Now, for indoor sensory experiences, this is going to sound strange, but think about it for a minute. For body awareness, you need a good traffic pattern indoors. "If I can not navigate the space, I am lost." That

continued to page 11

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Ooo La La! Making French Bread

Story and Photos by Lillian DeVault Kroenke

It's Tuesday again—time to make French bread. It's early in the school year so this group of children are making French bread for the very first time. Everyone is focused in anticipation. After all, we are talking food!

The head chef, David Shelton-Dodge, is just as enthusiatic. He gently and carefully gives instructions and guidance as it is needed. Everyone works together for a common goal—freshly baked, warm French bread.

The simple step-wise sequence is easily presented and eagerly followed. When David asks a la *The Little Red Hen*, "Who will help me make the bread?" everyone responds, "We will." And the work begins.

David has combined the ingredients for the bread each Tuesday for years now so he no longer has an exact recipe to share. In the tradition of a true chef, he just knows how much ***feels*** right.

However, the recipe is something like this:

- **6 cups flour—add until the texture is soft and firm**
- **20 oz. water**
- **1 Tablespoon yeast**
- **a little sugar to mask the taste of the yeast**

Beat the ingredients together with a large whisk.

Add 1 Tablespoon salt at the end.

When the loaf is formed:

1. The adult cuts several slits in the top of the crust with a knife. The "Ooo la la!" is optional.
2. A child (or children) spreads a mixture of eggs and water liberally on the crust with a wide pastry brush.
3. A child (or children) sprinkles sesame seeds or poppy seeds on top.
4. Carry the baking pan into the kitchen for baking.

Place a baking pan with water on the bottom shelf of the oven to help harden the bread crust.

Bake at 400°F using the water until the crust is golden brown. The bread bakes fast.

David Shelton-Dodge has been the visionary leader of the Hope Montessori Infant and Toddler Community in Creve Coeur, MO, for 19 years. His current official title is Administrator/Assistant to Infancy.

David received his AMS Infant/Toddler Certification at MECA-Seton in 1986. He honors his teacher and mentor, Carolina Gomez. He has just spent much of the last two years helping to design and supervise the constuction of a new Infant and Toddler building at the original site of the school.

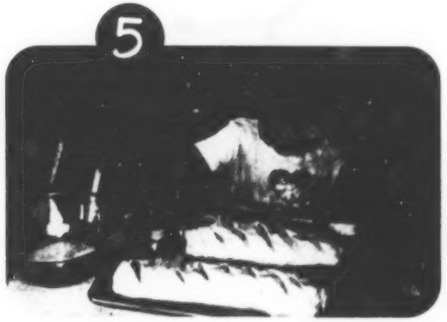
David has supervised interns from a number of teacher education programs. He also serves on the Review Board for *Infants and Toddlers*.

Once everyone has clean hands, the dough is divided into loaf-size portions.

First, we knead the dough.

Then we roll the dough to shape the loaf. Voila! At last the loaf takes its final shape.

The head chef slits the top of the loaf several times. With each cut of the French bread, everyone says, "Ooo la la!"



The egg/water glaze is brushed on to prepare the crust.

*Either **sesame seeds** or **poppy seeds** are sprinkled across the top.*

Some children help carry the loaves to the kitchen.

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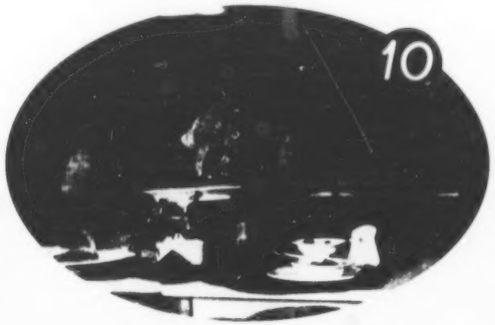
Once the job is done, it's time to clean up.

Claudine, the school cook, makes sure that each loaf is baked to perfection.



*The children serve themselves a bowl of soup and a slice of the warm freshly baked bread.**

*Ummm, ummm, good! Everyone enjoys the fruits of their labor.**

continued to page 10

9

*Special thanks to Sarah Mullen for her help with the photography.

Caring for Toddlers

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Toddlerhood is a state of being, with its own developmental characteristics and needs. Janet Gonzales-Mena (1989) asserts that many descriptions of toddlers come from comparing them with older children and the result is a negative view of toddlers' behavior, a deficit model that emphasizes what toddlers lack. She says that when teachers or parents think of toddlers as minature preschoolers, we invite problems for them because our expectations are not appropriate.

Developmental Tasks of Toddlers, Ages 18 Months to 3 Years

- To learn to think and solve problems on their own
- To learn to use the tools of and participate in daily life
- To make choices
- To know what they need and ask for help.
- To have opportunities for maximum movement and effort; to challenge the laws of gravity
- To create **self**
- To test reality and practice saying **no**
- To develop all of their senses: visual, auditory, olfactory, stereognostic and gustatory
- To express anger and other feelings
- To separate from parents in a healthy way
- To develop an awareness of an acceptance of other cultures

Activities for Toddlers

Care of the Indoor Enviornment

- Dusting—with multicolored dust cloths
- Scrubbing—with a variety of bright colored brushes
- Cleaning mirrors
- Sweeping
- Mopping
- Using a crumb brush
- Dusting and watering plants
- Arranging flowers in a vase
- Using a sponge
- Sorting and folding laundry

Cooking

- Scrubbing fruits and vegetables
- Chopping
- Spreading
- Stirring
- Scooping
- Using cooking tools: whisk, spatula, egg beater, tongs, fork, knife, spoons
- Cracking eggs
- Squeezing oranges, straining out the seeds
- Pouring
- Snapping green beans
- Shelling peas

Customs

- Setting the table
- Using napkins
- Expressing courtesies: please, excuse me, thank you
- Greeting people
- Being courteous to guests in the environment: serving them snacks, getting a chair, showing where to hang up coats

Using Tools to Solve Problems

- Learning the names of tools and their use: hammer, pliers, level, screwdriver
- Using tools to fix things in the environment

Taking Care of the Outdoor Environment

- Scrubbing the fence and painting it
- Scrubbing outdoor toys
- Sorting and putting away the outdoor toys
- Picking up litter
- Sweeping the sidewalks
- Raking leaves
- Hauling leaves in a wagon or wheelbarrow to the compost pile
- Taking care of animals

Feeding birds

- Grinding egg shells and crackers
- Transferring birdseed to a birdfeeder
- Raising and lowering the birdfeeder on a pulley
- Observing when the feeder is empty
- Observing the birds that come; Learning their names
- Learning what different birds like to eat

Gardening

Exercises all the senses.

- Digging—using maximum effort
- Sifting rocks from the soil
- Planting
- Watering
- Recognizing ripe fruits and vegetables and picking them
- Understanding where fruits and vegetables come from
- Taking food home to share with family
- Preparing food to eat at school
- Composting and recycling
- Observing differences in size, shape and color of seeds, plants, fruits and vegetables

Suggested Reading

1. Clarke, J. Illsley, *Self Esteem: A Family Affair*, Winston Press, 1981. (Leader guide also available)
2. Clarke, J. Illsley and Dawson, C. *Growing Up Again*, Harper and Row, 1989.
3. Dombro, A.L. and Wallach, L. *The Ordinary is Extra-Ordinary.*
4. Gonzalez-Mena and Widmeyer-Eyer. *Infants, Toddlers and Caregivers.* Mayfield Publishing Co, 1989.
5. Montessori, Maria. *The Child in the Family, p56.* Avon Books, 1970.

The adult must acquire the sensitivity to recognize all the child's needs; only thus can he give the child all the help that is necessary. If we were to establish a principle, it would be that what is necessary is the child's participation in our lives; for in that period in which he must learn to act, he cannot learn well if he does not see how, just as he would not learn language if he were deaf. To extend to the child this hospitality, that is, to allow him to participate in our lives is difficult but costs nothing—it depends solely on the emotional preparation of the adult.

Maria Montessori, (1970).

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SENSORY AWARENESS

continued from page 7

is what the baby thinks. A clear traffic pattern and a good flow in the environment is needed so the children can walk or crawl through the environment. Arrange the room with small natural cubbies or other small natural areas that are interesting to be in. All this fosters body awareness.

Furniture and Shelving

You probably know this next point. Furniture and shelves should be accessible to the height of the children in your program. If the children are on their bellies on the floor, where are your shelves? Don't make them fifteen inches off the floor. They can't reach them. The materials are ideally on the floor in baskets, on a quilt or something like that.

The shelves and furniture need to be accessible for height, weight and breadth. If furniture is too heavy, the fifteen-month-old can't move it across the room as he or she wants. Furniture, shelves and materials should be made from natural products as much as possible. Montessori described the three elements for materials—wood, cloth and metal. That is what you should feature in your environments. I prefer to use natural materials whenever possible.

Doors

Low doors and low windows enable the children to look outside. In one school where I observed, they had an adult door and a children's door. And the smaller the children, the lower the door so the children have a sense of their bodies coming into the space. Can you imagine a child who is only eight inches off the floor coming through a six-foot door? It's mind boggling. I wouldn't go in if there was a door thirty feet high. I'd go the other way. We need to think about practical kinds of things.

Tools

Your materials and your tools should fit the size of the children, not only their hands, but also their bodies. If they are too tall or too fat or too cumbersome, you are not respecting their need for body awareness. The smaller the children, the lower to the ground the materials and tools should be. You need small buckets and containers, small pitchers and watering cans to take care of the environment. You need flower pots for the children to care for, all sizes and shapes.

Again, I prefer metal for these kinds of things. If you have to use plastic, I recommend that the item has a metal component, like a metal handle. I have observed that metal feels better to the children. Plastic doesn't seem to be as stimulating and may suggest that plastic interferes with their sense of touch.

Pushing and Pulling

You need implements for pushing and pulling, things that have wheels, things that the children can fill, things that they can transport each other around in, brooms and mops, sweepers and dusters to hold and take care of the environment. You have heard about these materials for practical life, but this is for body awareness. Children have to discover how to use each item with their bodies?

Again, you need a bench or a soft chair where the child can sit to observe. Even little ones need to sit a moment to observe.

For Visual Awareness

For visual stimulation indoors, we need interesting things to look at. Mobiles made of natural materials are nice. You need mirrors—either floor mirrors or wall mirrors—so the children can look at themselves and look at other people. Photographs and art pieces of real life work well. Frame pictures of your children. Hang them on the wall. They'll love it. We talked about bringing the natural environment indoors with natural wreaths, garlands and swags already. They are also pleasant for the children to look at.

One of the things very little babies enjoy looking at is a little natural bracelet around their wrist or around their ankle. Children need interesting things to hold, to look at and grasp such as a woolen ball, rings on a string or a ball of yarn that they can unroll. Sometimes it's unrolled all over the environment and then we roll it back up so it can be unroled all over again.

For Auditory Awareness

For auditory stimulation, children need interesting things to hear. The mother's voice is their primary

continued on page 12

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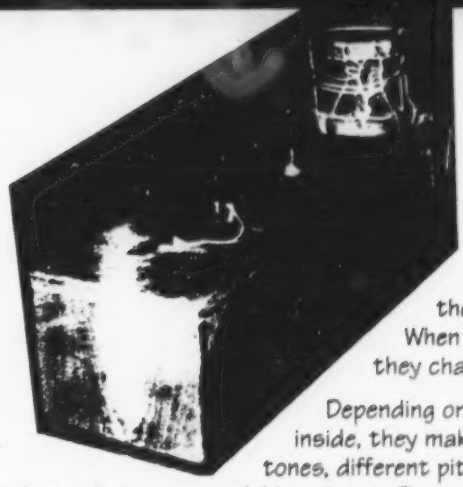
SENSORY AWARENESS

continued from page 11



stimulus—her voice, not your voice. The child is more sensitive to hers. Babies need song, music and environmental sounds. Over this past year, I brought in environmental sounds to play in the environment that correlated to each of the seasons.

It is amazing how well the children distinguished running water in a stream when it was raining outside in the spring. They can identify certain birds that sing only at a particular time of the year or the sounds of the wind. There was no background music. These are just environmental sounds. It was extremely calming. Many of us play music for the children all the time in our environments, but here I am suggesting listening to natural sounds.

Musical mobiles are nice. Listening to a string of bells is very beautiful indoors. For the really little ones, make a wrist rattle or a toe rattle with a beautiful ribbon and just one bell. Every time they move, it rings and they listen. "Where did that come from? Oh!" This is very simple- and inexpensive. For safety reasons, don't leave a baby alone with a wrist rattle or a toe rattle.

These are fun things that a mom could make to give something special to her baby. Other materials include bells to shake, flutes, whistles, and a drum. Again, it would be best if these could be made of metal or wood or leather.

We use dried gourds. In the fall, we collect all the gourds from the garden. We put them out to look at. Then I put them in the closet. I let them dry over the winter. I bring them back in the spring. Now we have rattles with different sounds, sizes and shapes. Just make sure the gourds don't have a hole because then they rot. When they dry, they change color.

Depending on the seeds inside, they make different tones, different pitches. The children listen. These sounds are loud. These are soft. You don't even have to say loud and soft. They know and they listen. They go up to their moms and they shake the gourds. Their moms say, "Oh, yes, yes, yes." The babies are saying this one sounds different from the other one. Babies need sound rattles and chime balls.

For Tasting Awareness

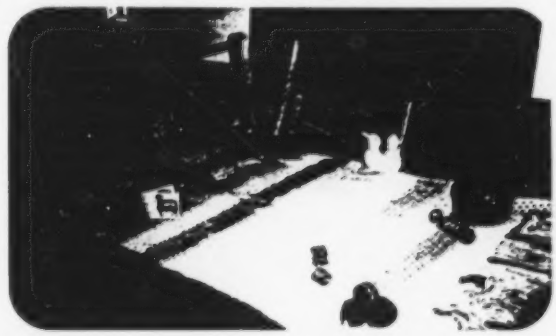
For tasting stimulation, infants need interesting things to taste. Milk ranks number one and mom's would be the best. Explore different kinds of foods, fresh fruits and vegetables, juices and, of course, water. In every class in my parent/infant environment, we serve water. There are two reasons. First, mothers will always let their babies use a cup with water because if it spills, there is no mess. If you are on the way to grandma's, for example, the water dries and there are no stains. So we use a cup with water when we begin weaning from bottles. Second, water is so beautiful to taste. It is the purest medium in nature. It is absolutely gorgeous, so why not taste it?

For Smelling Awareness

You need flowers, potpourri that you have dried yourself and some dried fruit. This year we have used bee's wax candles—those with scents and those without. We burned candles that match the seasons. For example, in the fall I brought in a cinnamon candle and a pumpkin candle. The children could tell the difference right away. In the winter, I brought in pine and bayberry. One mom gave me a peach candle for the spring. Other interesting things to smell would be foods, fruits, vegetables and elements of nature. Different kinds of woods, for example, smell differently.

For Tactile Awareness

For touch, we need environmental textures and shapes. Use wood or metal utensils and cloth linens.



Children need to play with their food. In order to have a sensorial experience, they need to take in what foods feel like. Studies show that children who play with their food have better eating habits as adults. I have no problems with playing with food as long as it gets to their mouths eventually. A pea squashes better than a carrot. Peas are wonderful for that pincher grasp.

As long as the babies are sitting at a table, the more they experience their food sensorially, the better they eat. You have to teach that to moms. That's a hard one. Because we are all trying to be clean, many moms prefer to feed their children.

And don't forget about water for the sense of touch. Children are aware of skin, the breast, clothing, hair, their body and their mom's body. These are all stimuli for touch.

For Body Awareness

For position in space, use interesting furniture, the floor, carpets and rugs, tables, chairs and benches. My older infants love a sturdy easel—that is an interesting piece of furniture. The babies are now pulling up on a surface that is at an angle. They have a lot of fun there.

Other interesting inside activities for body awareness include a slide, a stair, a tube or a tunnel, foam wedges, pillows, boosters—all kinds of different shapes to crawl on, to climb on and over, to stack and to sit on.

Balls of different sizes, shapes, weights and textures also stimulate position in space. I always give a homework assignment to our dads. I tell them that their role in life is to buy every ball they see. It doesn't matter what it is. It could be a football, a soccer ball, volleyball, or nerf balls—any kind of ball although baseballs and golf balls are a little too hard. And play ball with your child. Roll the balls on the floor, roll the balls in a circle, pick up a ball, carry a ball, throw a ball, or kick a ball. Dads are really into balls. It's a good thing to give them. Moms do different things but dads love balls. In twenty years, I've never had a dad say no.

Other things for body awareness would be streamers and balloons. But you can't leave your babies alone with balloons. You have to be present for safety reasons in case a balloon breaks. Balloons are wonderful to learn how to hold and carry. Flags, windsocks, and ribbons are also useful. Just put ribbon or yarn in a basket and see how much fun they have.

We need to use song and dance, music and movement, finger play and body play. Don't forget that massage, and yoga help with body positioning in space. Babies need hugs. They need to be kissed. They need to sit on people's laps and they need to pull up on your shoulder even when they get your shoulder pads all wet. They need to pull up on you and on mom. And they need to walk with mom. One of the most powerful stimuli to touch is reaching out, holding someone's hand and walking along. Just holding hands stimulates the whole body.

Helping Parents at Home

Because I am always with parents, I also have to talk about Montessori at home. So how can we take sensory awareness to the home? This is easily accomplished. What is your role as the teacher? What kind of pearls can you give your families?

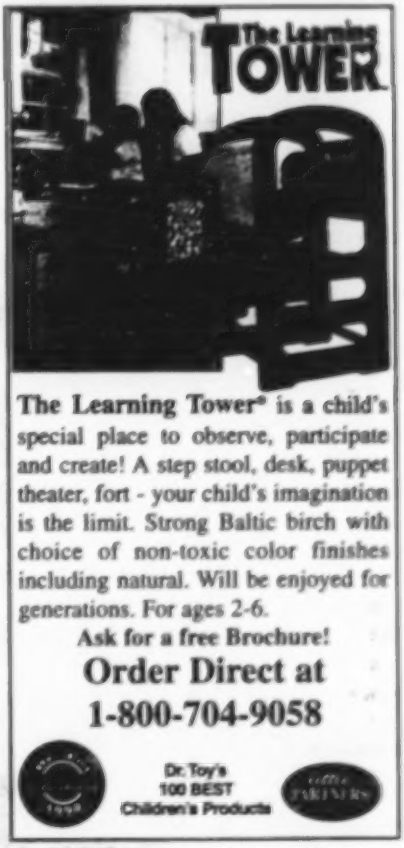
First, we must provide parents with information—about child development, about the development of the senses and the development of the mind. Then we must set the example. If we expect anything to go home, you have to role model your sensitivity and awareness to each child's individual potential. Look at each individual child with respect. If you do that, the parents will do that too.

We must accept that children will follow their own individual path to sensory awareness, at their own pace, and in their own time. We must be committed to provide a sensory rich environment, both indoors and outdoors. We must always seek to have children in touch with nature and the natural world around them.

If that is your role, then what is the role of the parent as the teacher? Remember that the home is the most sensitive environment for learning sensory awareness. The parent still remains the most trusted teacher. Even though you are the greatest teacher in the world, the child will look to the parent first and trust the parent first.

So what must the parents do? Parents must provide opportunities for their children to express and exercise their sensory awareness. For this to happen, parents can make it a priority to slow down and

continued to page 14



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SENSORY AWARENESS

continued from page 13

take the time necessary to allow the children to look, listen and learn about the world around them.

Invite the young child to smell and taste new experiences. So many times, I have heard the mother say, "Come. Let's smell the flower," and the child puts his or her nose in the flower. Instead, mom can say, "Come. Let's smell the flower," and breath in deeply—showing the child how to smell.

Remember, and this is for parents, most learning occurs in the mouth until the child is two. So, when the mom says, "He's putting everything in his mouth," you can say, "Oh, that's good. He's learning a lot." If mom says, "When is she going to stop doing this?" you can say, "Oh, I hope she never stops. It will go away by two when the hand takes over."

Reassure parents that most early learning occurs in the mouth. Actually, the inside of the mouth has more nerve endings than any other part of the body. That's why it is so sensitive.

Lastly, ask the parents to take the time to touch gently and to learn to handle all things with respect including their child. That's a tough one, but is well worth your time.

References:

For Children:

1. Bunting, Eve, *Sunflower House.*

You may want to build a sunflower house after reading this delightful book.

For Teachers and Parents:

1. Dannenmaier, Molly. *A Child's Garden.* Archetype Press Inc, Simon & Schuster, 1998.

Highly recommended! A beautiful book about young children and their gardens. Contains a good bibliography, a list of organizations, children's gardens to visit and resource suppliers to help you create your own child's garden.

Books by Maria Montessori:

1. Montessori, Maria. *The Absorbent Mind.* Clio, 1993.
2. Montessori, Maria. *The Child in the Family. Avon Books, 1970.*
3. Montessori, Maria. Discovery of the Child. Clio, 1986.
4. Montessori, Maria. The Secret of Childhood. Clio, 1983.

A trained pediatrician, Patricia M. Picchetti, M.D is AMS Certified for Birth to 3 and 3-6. She is an AMS Consultant and Accreditation Team Member, as well as an AMS presenter nationally and regionally. Patricia is a Visiting Professor for Concordia University's Department of Educational Research and Administration. She is a member of Loyola University's Department of Pediatrics Family Home Visit Program.

Dr. Picchetti is a Lecturer and Consultant for the MECA-Seton Teacher Preparation Training. She is also the Directress for Seton Montessori School's Parent-Infant Program.

Patricia insists that her most important role is being a parent for her four children.

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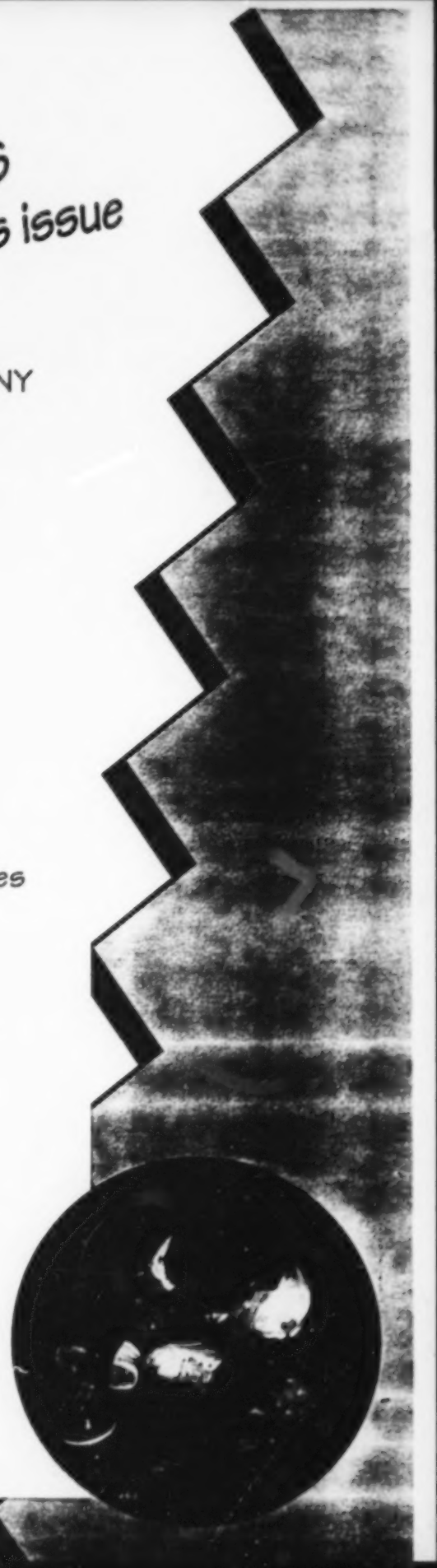

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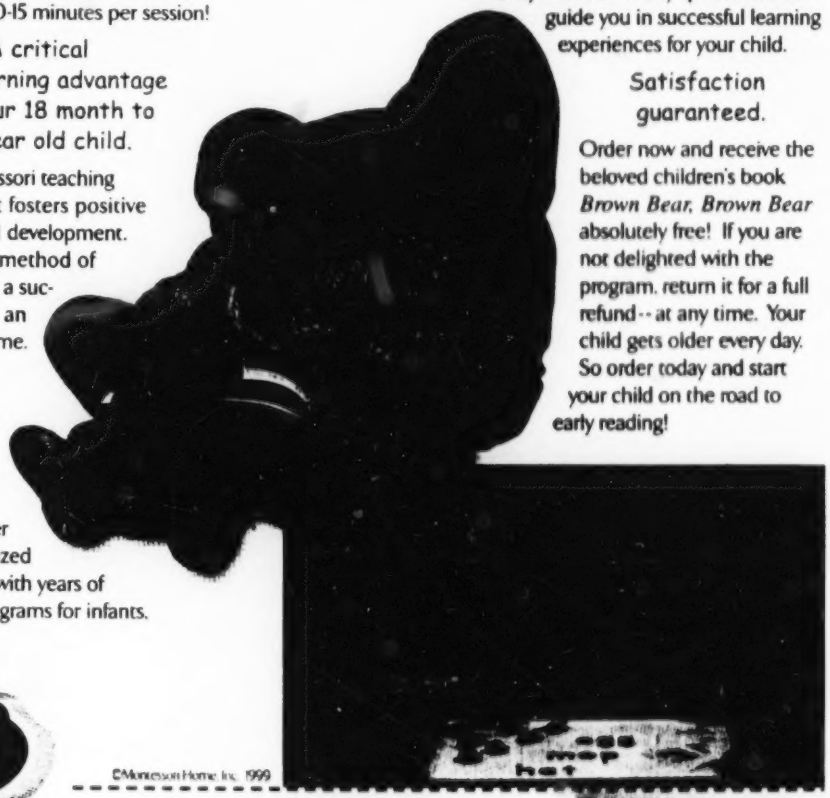

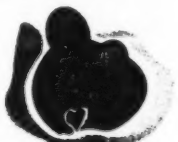

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FEATURES

5-13 **Infant and Toddler Environments–Ten Key Conditions for Creating Responsive Care**
by Carole Wolfe Korngold with K.T.Korngold

DEPARTMENTS

4 **Editorial**
Important Details

4 **Ask Ginny**
Parents often ask, "When should we tell our toddler that we are having a baby?"

14 **Job Opportunities**

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Editorial

Important Details

Living Legacy

In March, Carole Wolfe Korngold will be honored by the American Montessori Society with this year's Living Legacy Award at their 40th Anniversary celebration in New York City.

Carole has been an active leader in Montessori education since the early 60's. Her special focus is in Montessori infant and toddler programs. Carole is also the single most outspoken champion and supporter of Infants and Toddlers from its inception in 1997.

In this issue we are pleased to honor Carole Wolfe Korngold with the publication of one of her many contributions in this effort.

The Living Legacy is a scholarship fund that provides financial aid to students for Montessori teacher education. Your tax-deductible contribution to this celebration may be sent to: The AMS Scholarship Fund, 281 Park Avenue South, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10010-6102

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We are pleased to announce that starting with the next issue, Volume 4, Number 1, we plan to expand Infants and Toddlers.

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Correction:

Please note that the article, Caring for Toddlers, in Volume 3, Number 3 of Infants and Toddlers was compiled by Kaye Levy, a CMTE/NY staff member.

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Ask Ginny...

by Ginny Varga

Q Parents often ask, "When should we tell our toddler that we are having a baby?"

A Basically, young children have not had enough experience in life to judge periods of time. Perhaps you can remember when you were a child waiting for Christmas or Hanauka how terribly long a year was. In fact, most toddlers don't even remember the previous Christmas.

The point is that nine months is a very long time for a young toddler to wait for some anticipated event. Therefore, I would not recommend telling the chid about the new baby more than a week or two weeks before the anticipated event.

When a young child is told too early, as when the parents learn about the pregnancy, it can cause anxiety or worry for some children.

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Infant and Toddler Environments – Ten Key Conditions for Creating Responsive Care

By Carole Wolfe Korngold with K.T. Korngold

Montessorians have long been aware that the type and quality of early interactions with babies and toddlers have definitive and long-lasting effects on how children develop and how they learn, how they cope with stress and how they regulate their own emotions. We strive to create positive, nurturing, nourishing, and developmentally appropriate environments in our schools, childcare centers and homes. To do this, it is important that we are aware of the key conditions that are necessary for the healthy development of trust, language, exploration, movement and curiosity—the sensitive periods which occur during this crucial time in a child's life.

Order and consistency, appropriate limits and expectations, consistent procedures and routines result in the development of basic trust and help support thinking and problem solving, independence and strong self-esteem. Appropriate procedures and routines in our infant and toddler classrooms (i.e. transitions, eating, napping, diapering, cleaning, phasing-in) are discussed in the tenth key.

1. Trust

The development of basic trust is an essential ingredient for the development of a healthy person. Without it, children suffer emotionally and physically, and grow into adults who will continue to be challenged. With basic trust, we find healthy adults who are well equipped to cope with life.

One of the key factors in establishing basic trust is for the child to receive responsive care from parents and caregivers. The quality and tone of the care we give a child plays a vital role in the child's development. Babies thrive physically and emotionally when they receive warm, responsive care.

A strong, secure attachment to a nurturing adult or adults also can have a protective biological function. This attachment helps the growing child (and the adult she will become) withstand the ordinary stresses of daily life. Because the capacity to control our emotional state hinges on biological systems shaped by our early experiences and attachments, we believe that the quality of these experiences has a direct impact on the child's developing biological systems.

Therefore, it is extremely important to respond immediately to a small child when she expresses a need or an infant when she cries. Crying is an infant's way of expressing a need. To feel safe and build trust in this world, a child needs to know that she will receive a response.

2. Touching

Appropriate touch is extremely important for a baby. When we hold and gently stroke an infant, the child's brain releases hormones. These hormones have different jobs. Some stimulate growth, while others create good feelings of love and safety. Taken together, these help the child face the world with

continued to page 6

Carole Wolfe Korngold...

is well known in Montessori circles as the Director of the Center for Montessori Teacher Education/New York (CMTE/NY). Carole co-hosted the Montessori International Congress in Rome, Italy, in November, 1996. She is a past president of the American Montessori Society.

This year Carole has been named the AMS Living Legacy and will be honored at AMS's 40th Annual Seminar.

Carole was instrumental in founding The Early Learning Center in Albany, NY, where her children started, and Westchester Day School in Mamaroneck, NY.

Carole holds both AMS Infant/Toddler and Early Childhood certification. She received her Bachelors from Syracuse University and her MEd from Manhattanville College, NYC.

Carole is the mother of two children, Jamie, a rabbi, and K.T., a writer. She is also the proud grandmother of K.T.'s daughter, Sarah.

Photographs submitted by Carole Korngold and Jim Conner

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TEN KEY CONDITIONS

continued from page 5

trust and joy. Some children like to be touched firmly and quickly, others gently and softly. Each child needs and deserves to receive the kind of touch that makes him or her most comfortable. How wonderful it is when infant massage is a daily activity in an infant's life.

3. Engaging with the Child

Babies experience how you look into their eyes. They see the expression on your face. An infant may engage with a caregiver who looks at him with wide-open eyes and a smiling mouth, and disengage when the look is closed off or shut down. We should aim to be friendly and warm to our children, to create environments of our faces that are warm, respectful and welcoming, not overpowering, negative or judgmental.

The feeding process provides an important time for both the adult and the child. The adult's eyes should be foused on baby's—not looking around the room. She is not looking for another teacher or for other conversation. That is our primary goal—to be engaged with each child—no matter what we are doing.

Children hear you cooing, singing, talking and reading. They feel you holding or rocking them. They take in your smells. They often experience the taste of your skin as well as their own.

4. Talking with the Infant and the Toddler

With the great plasticity of the child's brain in infancy, talking to infants is extremely important. This is how children learn language. In addition to learning words, babies are learning sound patterns and how language functions.

Since talking occurs with others, we can model, practice, and in fact, enjoy conversations with even the smallest newborn. Our interactions should be reciprocal. The baby coos and we coo back. The baby babbles and we respond. A conversation is taking place. In addition, whenever we speak to an infant, we should pay attention to the words we use, the clarity, speaking slowly and softly and our tone of voice. We are giving them the currency they will use to build their own language bank.

A young child delights in being told the names of the many different objects in our world. Point out what the child sees, what she holds. "Banana. This is a banana!" Keep the information short and give the name and or color only. There is no need to add, for example, "...and it grows far away on a big tree." Try, for example, "This is a red radish" instead of "The radish is bitter and you won't like the way it tastes." Let the child feel the radish. It might end up in her mouth. Feed your child names and you give the child the keys to the universe. "Radish. This is a red radish." Giving children the names of things helps them make sense of this world, to feel control and build trust.

4. Reading

Reading to children is one of the great delights of life. From infancy, children love being read to. Children learn early how reading works. They can look at the pictures and learn to turn pages. Read individually and in small groups to children. Let them be part of the process by choosing the books themselves, finishing the sentences or ends of poems, reading back to you what you read to them. You will end up with children who love books and love to read.

5. Freedom of Movement

Walk into a well-planned Montessori infant environment and you will notice it is peaceful, calm and safe. It is attractive and free of obstacles to provide for maximum freedom of movement. Activities are those that respond to the child's sensitive periods.

Because we believe that freedom of movement is paramount, and essential for healthy brain and body development, there is a striking

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absence of equipment designed to contain the child. In a quality infant environment, you will not see any electric swings, jumpers, playpens, cribs, high chairs, harnesses or walkers. In Montessori, we try never to place children in a position or place that they could not naturally get in or out of themselves. We want to encourage the development of the child's muscles sequentially.

As a child moves or looks around at the world, the child's brain uses the information to help organize the brain itself. If you restrict activity, you inhibit the formation of synapses that connect in the brain's cerebellum. Even a child's initial most spastic movements send a signal to the brain's motor cortex.

An Infant Montessori classroom is an environment for children ranging in age from 3 months or younger to 18 months. Some babies are crawling, others are able to sit up; still others are walking. At the Montessori Children's Center at Burke, there is a place for children to crawl into and to crawl out of, a bridge to scoot up, a place to pull up, and different surfaces—soft carpet, wooden floor, smooth tile—for children to play on and experiment.

Give children things to push. Give them things to pull. Discovery baskets or treasure baskets, offer tactile experiences for children who are not yet walking. You can place a treasure basket in front of a child and she can explore the different items in it. (Varga, 1998)

Allison begins a large climb up to the top of the steps. She is carefully climbing the stairs, looking around to be sure that it is safe for her to get up. There is a certain amount of apprehension, but she certainly is careful as she reaches the top. And then she makes it! Everest, who is already walking, is able to get to the top very fast. Allison is looking as if to say, "How did you get up here so fast?"

This is Sarah beginning her rock climbing experiences. She was not walking yet, but she was crawling strongly. You can see her looking up at a great big formation from her point of view. Climbing is a slow process.

Here she goes climbing up, reaching, looking and figuring out how she is going to get there. This is problem solving. And there she goes, climbing up to the top, almost there! Hallelujah! She made it! Give your children many opportunities to crawl and move freely. (Kroenke, 1997)

6. Allowing Freedom to Chose

Cognitive functions such as cause and effect, making choices, making decisions, can be seen in very young children. Choosing their own activities is extremely important. When infants are in the stage of the unconscious absorbent mind, activities and materials call to the child. They are not necessarily the materials that the adult thinks are cute or sweet.

Sarah was using a basket and was very, very engrossed with what she was doing. This is a very lovely little basket that her grandmother had found and purchased for her specifically. Sarah decided that she was going to use the basket in another way. Very slowly she took it apart. But, because we value concentration so much, I just marveled at what she had done and how clever she was to discover this new use. I can always buy a new basket. I can't always buy concentration for this child.

continued to page 8

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TEN KEY CONDITIONS

continued from page 7

Here Jean is placing a ring just out of reach for Megan, who is beginning to reach for it. Jean is not giving it to her. She is letting her reach and stretch to get it herself. Once she places the ring for her, Jean will move away. Her work is done! Megan is engaged!

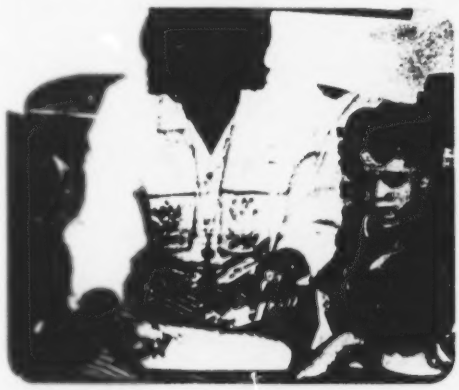
8. Supporting the Development of Curiosity

Freedom of movement, freedom to explore, and exposure to new experiences all contribute to the development of curiosity. There are many activities carefully placed on the open shelves around the room. Some which children do on their own, such as cause and effect, and others which are facilitated by a teacher, such as food tasting.

At some point during the morning, depending on the flow of the children on that day, the teacher invites one child to roll out the food tasting rug. When the child rolls out the special red rug, it is a cue to the other children that it is time for a food tasting or a language exercise. The cue is only the silent unrolling of the rug, rather than more intrusive cues such as a bell ringing or a light going off and on. The children sense that there is another activity being offered to them. Those who want to come to the activity come to the rug. Others continue at their own work.

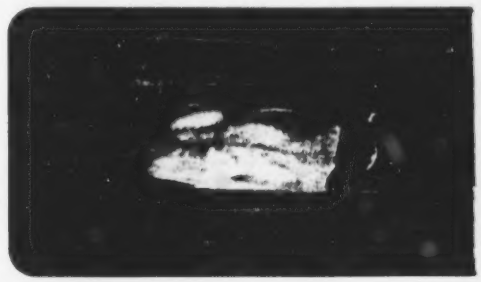
We give children the experience of a variety of foods by offering one new food at a time for a week. The teacher states, "This is a Chinese apple," and points out its characteristics. The children hold and smell it. They cut it open and discover what it tastes like. "It is crunchy," one of the children says.

There are many ways to improve an activity. When the apple slices were passed around there was a lot of, "You touched that piece, so now you must take it." In order to assure control in the activity, the teacher purchased a tray that has a cup indention in the corner. Then, when she passes around the plate to the children, she places the piece of apple in that one spot. The children now know that the piece is theirs because that is the message that is given without words.



9. Creating Developmentally Appropriate, Healthy Environments:

Infant or toddler environments should contain furniture scaled to the size of the child and at the child's level. Low chairs, tables, open shelves and low beds are an important part of the environment. We use low chairs and tables for eating so the children can participate in their own daily living activities.



Low Beds

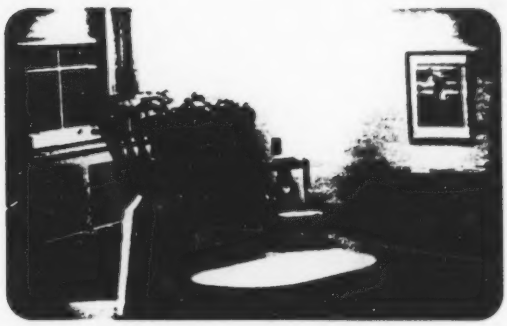
Low beds enable us to provide freedom of movement for children because they can get into the bed when they are tired and climb out when they are rested. There are a variety of low beds that can be used. Here are two examples:

- At home, legs can be cut off regular children's commercial bed.
- The beds we had made for the Montessori Children's Center at Burke were designed by Virginia Varga. These beds have a curved bottom so that the children can slowly rock themselves to sleep.

Beautiful, Peaceful Rooms

Montessori infant and toddler environments are subtle and lovely. The colors and backgrounds are subdued. It is the activities in the environment that call to the child because they meet an internal need—not, for example, a colorful mural on the wall depicting some adult's fantasy of what childhood means.

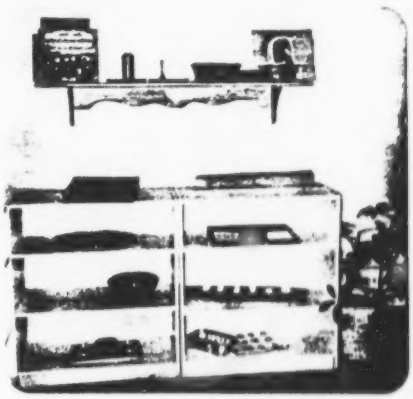
The infant and toddler environments should be as beautiful as they can be. Beauty is often in the eyes of



children because some of the chemicals used in the plastic are toxic. So often the little ones put the plastic toys in their mouths. (Tickner, 1998).

We all need to be concerned about sanitation and proper cleaning of our equipment. Nonetheless, I urge everyone to use natural wooden materials as much as possible.

the decorator. But one thing that you must keep in mind, regardless of your personal style, is that the environment must be simple and not cluttered. There should be beautiful pictures—reproductions of art or photos depicting children from a variety of cultures, animals, the natural world—hung low at the child's level, and rocking chairs for the adults and children. Plants, books and live flowers enrich this environment.



When materials are put on shelves, you want the children to be able to see them clearly. Materials for an activity should be contained in a basket or on a tray. Top shelves hold activities geared to the older children in the classroom. They can be brought down either as a child asks for them or when an adult wants to introduce them.

Natural Wooden Toys

Although it is easier and less expensive to use plastic, we prefer to use wooden toys. We do this for two reasons. First, we want to offer our children as much natural experiences in our environment as possible. Secondly, there is information available now claiming that PVC plastic is unhealthy for

Water Play

Water is very important for these little ones. Most children love to spend time playing with water. At Burke, we installed low sinks with faucets on the side so children can easily access the water and wash their hands without assistance. In environments with children ranging in age from 3-month-olds through 3 year olds, it is helpful to have sinks at different heights.

10. Consistent Procedures and Routines:

Phasing-In Children

Toddlers are excited about their growing sense of independence, but they are also feeling the loss of the special pleasurable relationship of oneness with their mother. For this reason we need to give children plenty of time to phase into our programs.

We handle phasing-in by asking parents of the new child to sit on a side of the room, so the child can go

continued to page 10

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TEN KEY CONDITIONS

continued from page 9

back and forth to them. This gives the child a sense of stability from their parents and enables the child to move back into the environment.

Lisa is working with a child with the mother sitting near the back, watching her child, always available.

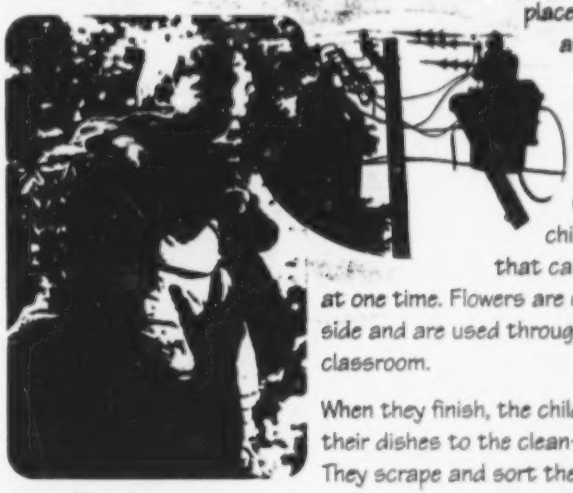
Even after the phase-in process is complete, good-byes are still said in the classroom. The teacher sits while greeting each child and waits for the child to say good-bye to Mom. Everything is geared to the children's pace.

Agnieszka is helping this child put the hanger in the coat. The coat is zipped up and the child easily hangs it up. The exercise has a beginning, a middle and an end. The pole in the children's coat closet has been lowered so children can hang up their own coats.

Time

In the infant room, children follow their own individual schedule. They sleep and eat according to their individual time clocks. Toddlers' time is set in sequence. For example, music follows food tasting or lunch follows outdoors. This gives children an opportunity to predict and think ahead.

Children look, see, and learn from us and from the environment. Being able to look at a flower and have enough time to explore it is important. Time is so crucial for these little ones and time in our society is so hurried. We need to give nature back to our children with plenty of time to explore and see the wonders of this world.



Some men were working on the wires. Somehow Sarah spotted them. Her grandpa was able, with great love, to hold her up for almost twenty minutes while Sarah observed what the men were doing high up in the sky. We need to give the children in our care the same time.

Snacks

The morning snack for some children is breakfast for others. It is set up first thing in the morning on a buffet. Children help themselves when they are hungry. There is a big bowl on the side so the children can scoop out cereal, little bowls to put their food in, and a pitcher of juice or milk and small glasses.

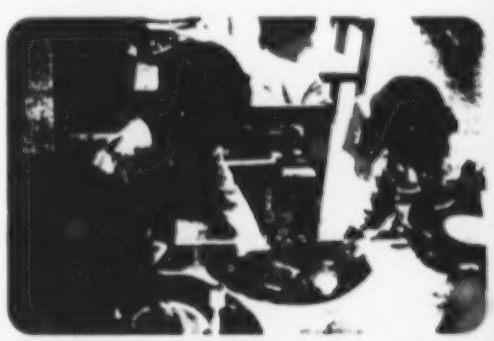
Waffles are another favorite and children like to spread the jam on them. The pitchers are always very small and hold only enough for one glass so the children can pour their own juice. A teacher is stationed near by to refill the glass pitcher after every use.

When the children finish serving themselves, they go to the table to sit down with friends. Five place mats are set at the table to control the number of children that can snack at one time. Flowers are on the side and are used throughout the classroom.

When they finish, the children bring their dishes to the clean-up area. They scrape and sort the dishes and empty and stack the glasses.

There is water in the dishwashing pan. Some time during the morning, a child may come over, put on an apron and wash the dishes.

We have two buckets—a blue one and a green one. The blue one is for the place mats with a blue sponge. The green one is for the floor. When a child spills something on the floor—no big fuss! The child simply goes over to get the green sponge and wipes it up. *(Korngold, 1999)*



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Eating

Infants who are not yet sitting up are fed in an air chair. An air chair is very responsive to the child's movements. If she wants to move, it will move. If she doesn't want to move, it will keep her still.

Looking into the infant's eyes, the adult takes food and when the child opens her mouth, places it just on the tip of the baby's tongue. The child actually takes food into her mouth when she is ready. The teacher waits patiently for the child to open her mouth again. The child is in control of her own eating.

When children can sit up, we seat them on a chair. As soon as they can sit up, we give them a real glass or cup to drink from—not a sippy cup. Infants still get their bottles, but this experience for the children helps them move to independence and the awareness that, "I can do it by myself." At first, the teacher helps the little ones drink from a glass. *(Goebe and Gregory, 1998)*

As the mother pours milk into the child's glass at home, the child in her little chair is already participating. "Come on, Mom. Hurry up." Children concentrate on the process. We value concentration greatly with our children and we don't want to interrupt or intrude its flow.

The Role of the Adult Intervention

So, when do you intervene with the child and when do you let the child just be? In another example of moving, Sarah has just flipped over. K.T. is observing. No clapping or cheering; just a recognition– "Sarah you turned over."

You can setup a home environment for a very young child. Your child is a member of the family and should have space wherever the family is.

Here the children are putting rings on a post with Maureen's help. Maureen entered into the picture because one child, Danny, was having a problem. And what did she do? All she did was put out her hand to steady the post. There was no big conversation. She wanted to enter his field of concentration and be able to leave without Danny knowing that she was there—just knowing that he was successful. Timing when and how you enter or intervene with a child is very important.

One of the most important things in this environment is the adult and who he or she is. Eric Booth, author of *Everday Work of Art*, tells us that eighty percent of learning depends on who the adult is in our environment. For infants and toddlers, this is extremely important. *(Booth, 1999)*

As children learn to interact with each other, they need an adult who understands and can empathize with this transitional stage of development. This stage is really marked by great feelings of ambivalence for the child. With adult guidance, children can explore feelings and being with each other.

Children can also help in the process. Everest, who was walking by, saw another young child who was crying out. The teachers did not respond to that child because they knew that Everest was there. They waited to see what would happen. Everest went over to the crying child, and if she could have talked, looked as if she was saying, "Wait a minute. I am here for you. Don't fret. I'm here to help you." She got involved. She engaged the child with her. We can learn so much from our children!

Transitions

Music and dancing are very important. These are joyful activities as children come and go or move into a transition period. There are many different kinds of transitions you can use. In some cases, we ring a bell when the children are to move to another room, for lunch or to go outside. Here Erica is ringing the bell to go outside.

continued on page 12

TEN KEY CONDITIONS

continued from page 11

Diapering/ Toilet Education:

Diapering is a very important part of the process of toilet education. Young children need to feel that they are in control, that they are part of the process and that something is not being done to them. When we set up the diapers, we use the children's pictures so they can choose their own diapers. Then they will diaper themselves with the help of a teacher who is nearby. This becomes a natural part of what they do. When you look into the bathroom, you may see someone using the toilet or someone taking off a diaper. All this leads to a positive process of toilet education.

For the very young child, I think that cloth diapers are by far the best. However, when working in childcare in our state, you must use disposable diapers. One of the things that I like about them is the Velcro closing, so the children are really in charge of taking off and putting on their own diapers. And, of course, the children wash their hands at the low sinks.

Lunch—Setting Up Meals

It is important to be consistent with procedures. Mealtime is an excellent time to establish procedures that will empower children. Every day, two children set the tables and prepare the room for lunch. It is probably more work for the teacher than if she did it herself. But we are involving the children in what they love best—doing what the adults around them usually do. It is self-care, practical life, sorting, problem solving, doing for others and it is also part of working together.

The adult sets up the buffet with the plates, forks and napkins-everything the children will use to set the tables. The children start by moving the chairs. Then the place mats are put on, followed by the plates and so forth and, of course, always the flowers.

It's time for lunch. The children are in the next room. They come in one at a time. We use the bell again for the transition. The children know where they are sitting because they sit at the same place every day, with the same teacher. The food is served family style. The teacher can remain seated during the entire process because everything has been done ahead of time.

The children pour their own milk or juice. The bread is cut into little pieces and put into a basket. The children help themselves to the bread and the butter. They butter their own bread.

These are all tasks that would probably be easier if the teachers did it all ahead of time. Everything would go faster, but that is not our goal. Our goal is to give children as many experiences as possible.

We assist the children. We do not do the task for them. After eating, the children sort their dishes and their silverware. This is an example of sorting that is built into their everyday life.

Eric has a sponge to clean his mat. Sometimes things don't work out just as we want. Eric misses the bucket. No teacher rushes over to say, "You need to get it in the bucket." She waits to see what happens. Eric finishes his task and immediately goes on to wipe the table.

It is important not to interrupt a child's cycle of work as he is doing it. One of the teachers probably put a towel on the floor to wipe it up so that there wouldn't be any accidents. But she did not interrupt Eric's work.

Getting Ready for Naps

The teacher's job is to put the cots down and put them in a row. The children's job, after they have finished eating and have gone to the bathroom, is to set up their cots. Friends help each other put them in their usual places.

Even taking a nap is a process and the children know the sequence. The blinds are down. The music is softly playing. They get themselves ready to nap. Some children take longer, but they are all involved in this process.

Adults Model Behavior

One of the many moving and beautiful things that happen in our environments is that children are respectful and helpful to each other. If we can model this behavior for the children, they will pick it up and learn to be kind, gentle and giving. Isn't that what we are all about—helping to nurture future adults who are caring and kind to each other?

Here you see Kaitlyn helping Avi, rubbing his back and just being there for him.

Being a professional infant and toddler specialist seems likely to remain as much of an art as a science. Childcare is a collective good, not just for parents, but for all of us in our society. It is an economic issue for our entire labor force.

My Challenge To You

Our challenge, the challenge that I leave you with is to be models of exemplary programming. If you have a half-day program, make it a full day program. If you have one class, open another. If you are thinking of opening an all day childcare program for children and parents, do it!

Only seven per cent of our society has the old, traditional family—dad working and mom at home. The rest of the children are some place else. There is a vacuum of quality care in our country. According to Hillary Clinton, "Childcare—infant and toddler care in our country is dismal." The vacuum is going to be filled by someone. I want it to be filled by us.

We need to work together. Focus on children is a focus on the future. As

continued to page 14

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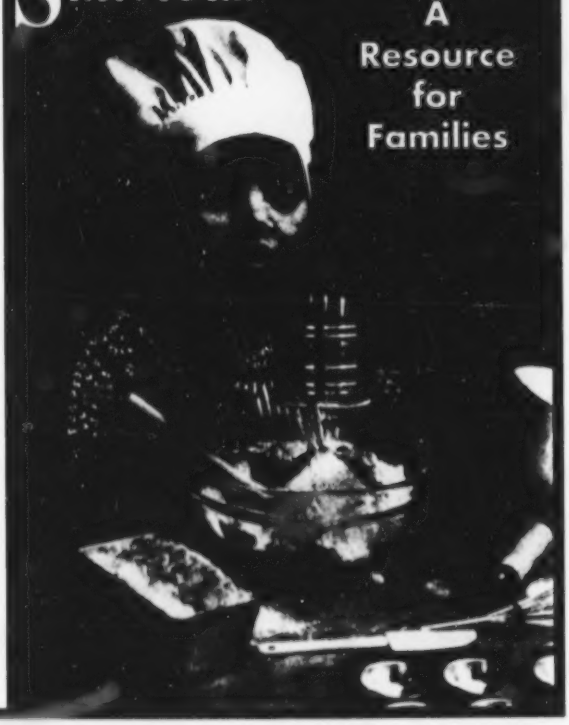

TEN KEY CONDITIONS

continued from page 13

Montessorians, we have an opportunity to reach out to the national community. You are the people who can do it the best. We have a gift that we can share with our society.

This is a great challenge for all of us. The more children and parents we share our gift with, the more children who will grow up to be healthy, empowered members of our society—children who will grow up to face the world with trust and with joy.

The gift that we give to ourselves is the opportunity to see the world anew, to see the world through new eyes, as we share this journey with the child.

Please also see these related references:

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Job Opportunities

Corporate-funded day care center seeks two group teachers to work with children ages 2 to 3 1/2.

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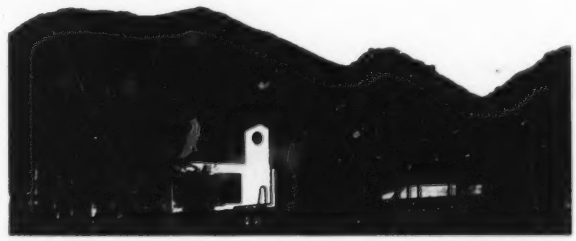

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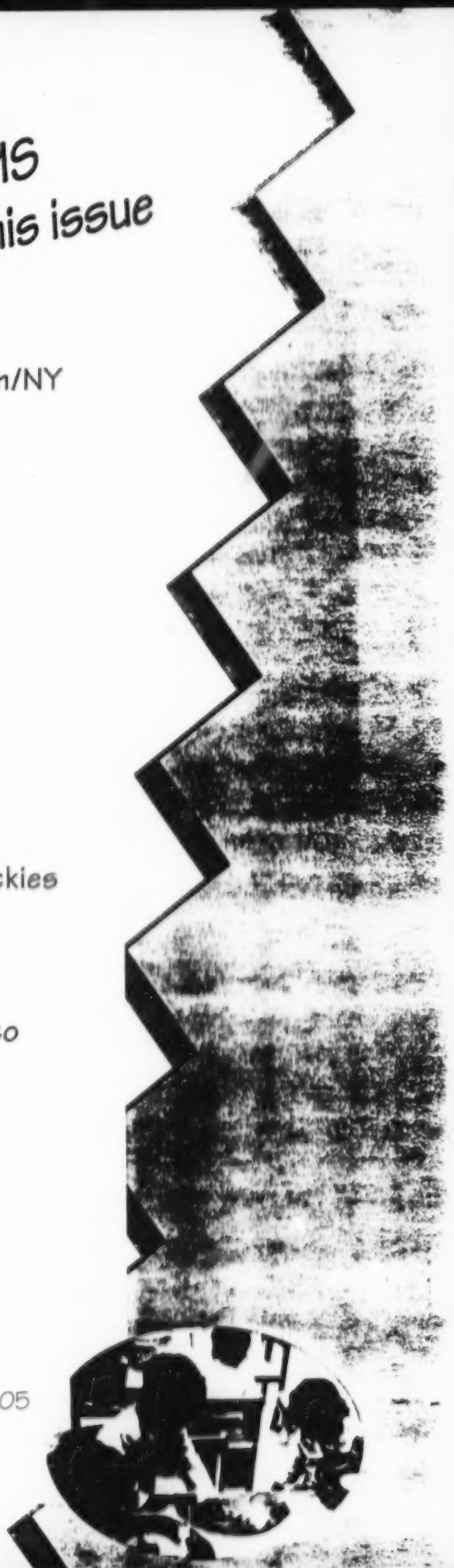

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